IDW

2023

COUNTDOWN TO DAY OF BLOOD

KELLY • LANZING • STOTT • KIRCHOFF • COWLES

STAR TREK™ ANNUAL

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THE *U.S.S. THESEUS* IS AN EXPERIMENTAL STARSHIP CREWED BY STARFLEET LEGENDS.

HER WARP CORE RUNS ON A CONTAINED NEUTRON STAR.

HER COMPUTER SYSTEM IS A SHIPWIDE NEURAL NETWORK.

SHE HAS FACED DOWN GODS AND MONSTERS.

BUT MANY OF HER SYSTEMS REMAIN A MYSTERY EVEN TO HER CREATOR...

THE LEGENDARY ENGINEER MONTGOMERY SCOTT.

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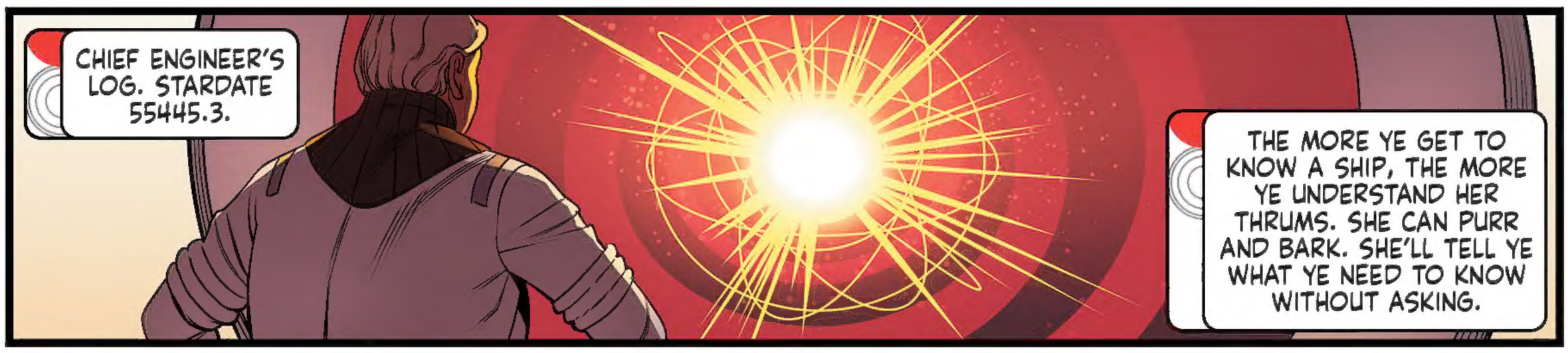
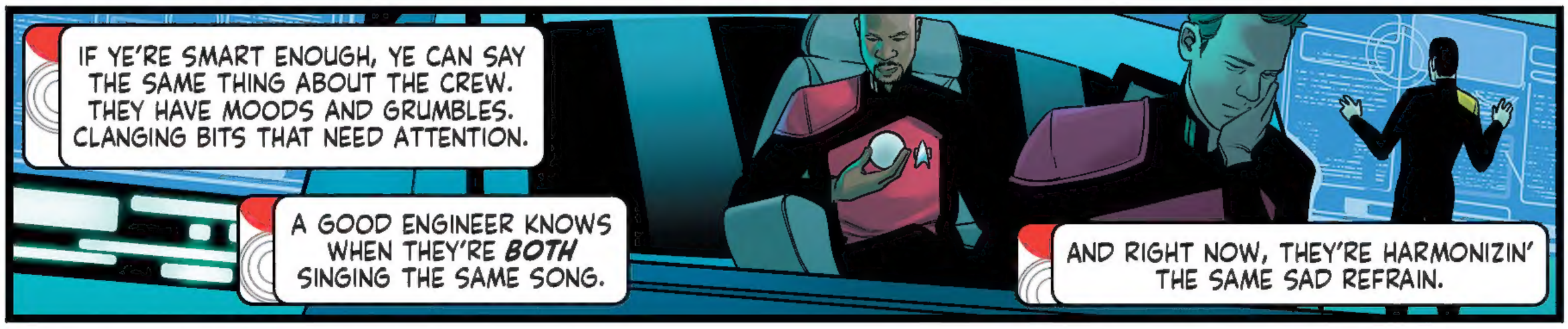
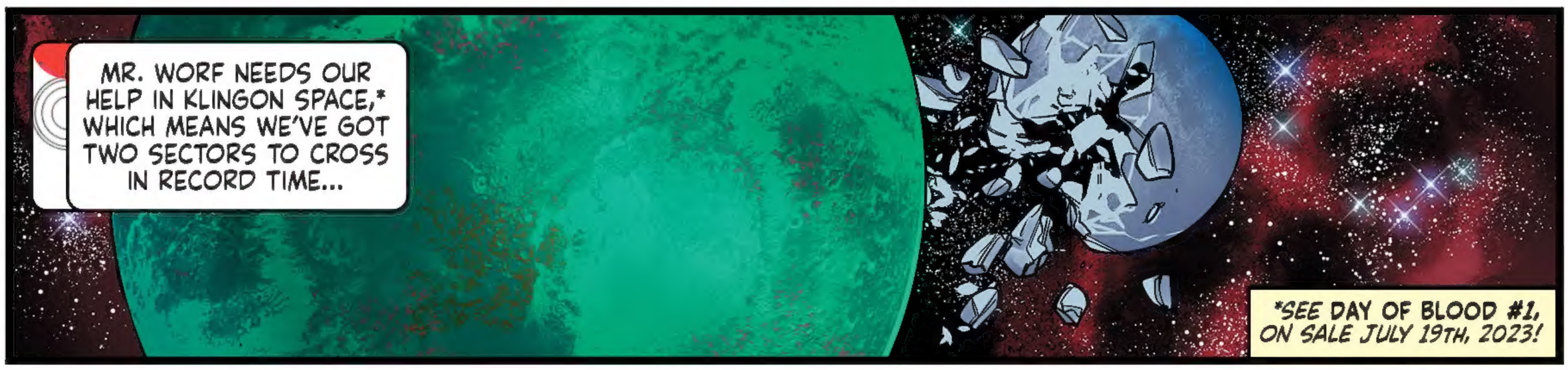
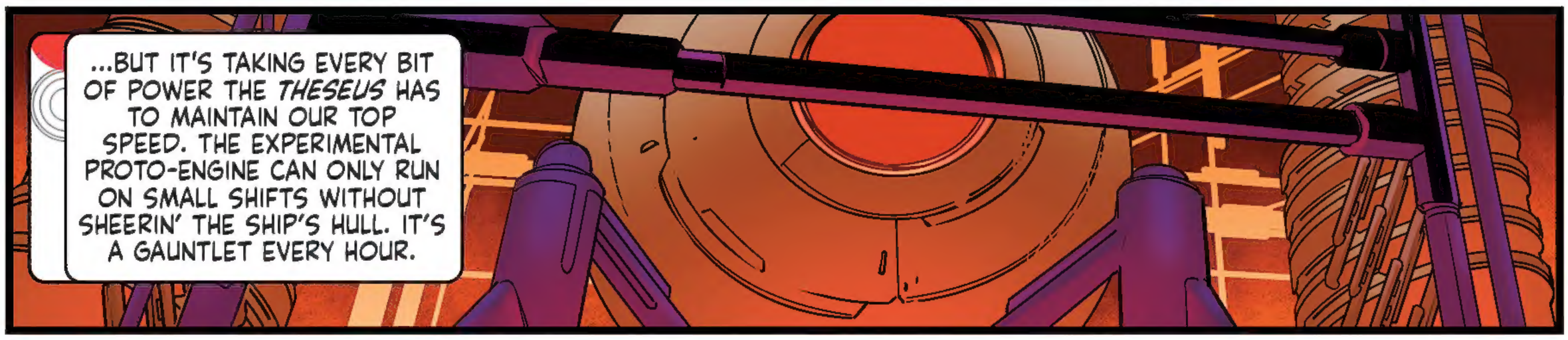
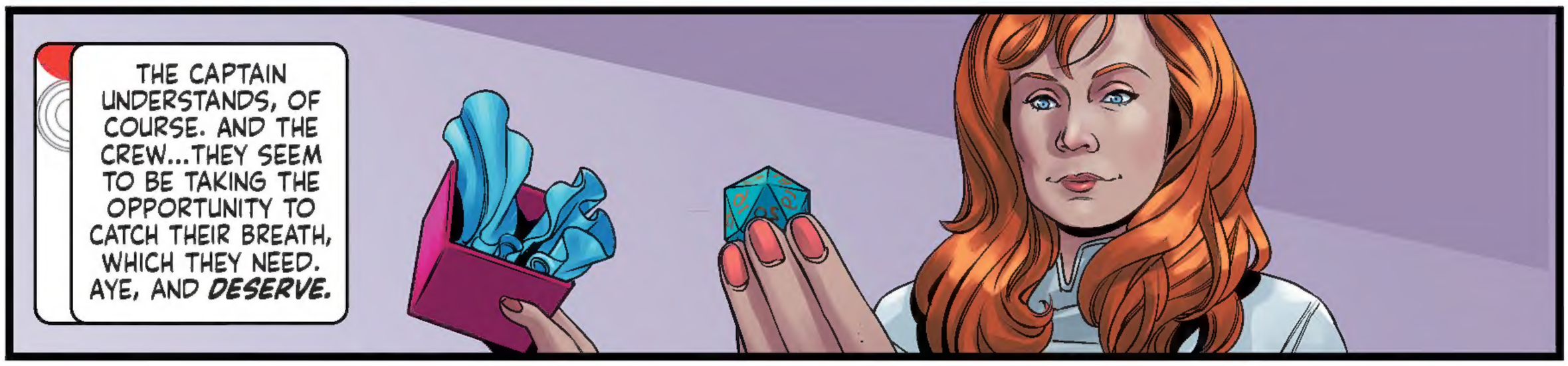

CHIEF ENGINEER'S LOG. STARDATE 55445.3.
THE MORE YE GET TO KNOW A SHIP, THE MORE YE UNDERSTAND HER THRUMS. SHE CAN PURR AND BARK. SHE'LL TELL YE WHAT YE NEED TO KNOW WITHOUT ASKING.


IF YE'RE SMART ENOUGH, YE CAN SAY THE SAME THING ABOUT THE CREW. THEY HAVE MOODS AND GRUMBLES. CLANGING BITS THAT NEED ATTENTION.
A GOOD ENGINEER KNOWS WHEN THEY'RE BOTH SINGING THE SAME SONG.
AND RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE HARMONIZIN' THE SAME SAD REFRAIN.

WE CANNAE TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS.


MR. WORF NEEDS OUR HELP IN KLINGON SPACE,* WHICH MEANS WE'VE GOT TWO SECTORS TO CROSS IN RECORD TIME...
*SEE DAY OF BLOOD #1, ON SALE JULY 19TH, 2023!


...BUT IT'S TAKING EVERY BIT OF POWER THE THESEUS HAS TO MAINTAIN OUR TOP SPEED. THE EXPERIMENTAL PROTO-ENGINE CAN ONLY RUN ON SMALL SHIFTS WITHOUT SHEERIN' THE SHIP'S HULL. IT'S A GAUNTLET EVERY HOUR.


THE CAPTAIN UNDERSTANDS, OF COURSE. AND THE CREW...THEY SEEM TO BE TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH THEIR BREATH, WHICH THEY NEED. AYE, AND DESERVE.

BUT I'VE SPENT 60 OF THE LAST 70 YEARS SLEEPING IN A PATTERN BUFFER. MY BREATH IS PLENTY CAUGHT.
AND I CAN HEAR THIS SHIP. I KNOW WHAT SHE WANTS.

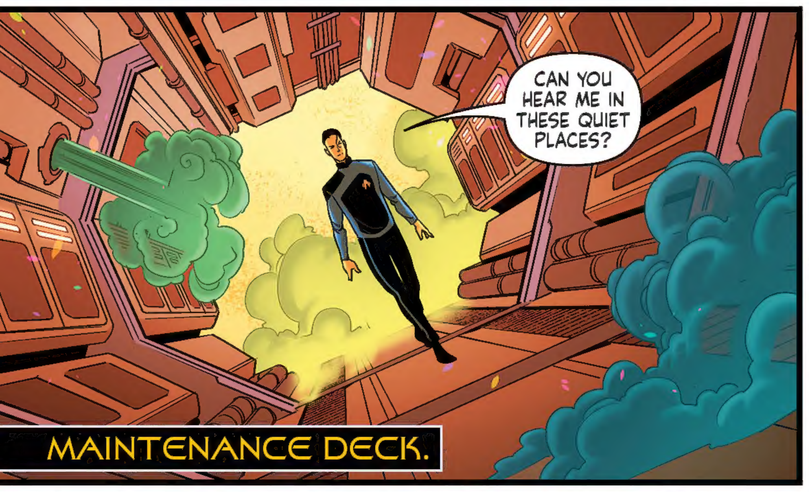
SHE WANTS TO GO...
...AND BOLDLY.

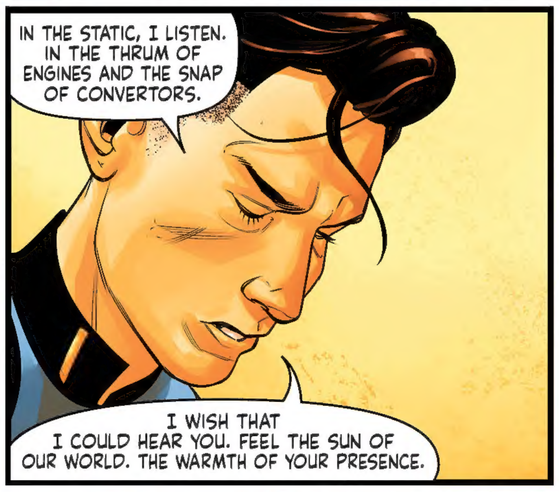
IT'S NOT ABOUT ACCELERATION, LILY. IT'S ABOUT MOMENTUM.
YOU'RE NEVER JUST...STILL. THE SHIP IS ALWAYS MOVING, CONSTANTLY ON THE FLOAT.
WHEN YOU'RE REALLY MOVING, IT'S MORE LIKE... SURFING.
THE BRIDGE.

WHICH IS SOMETHING I HAVE SPENT SO MUCH TIME DOING.
WELL THEN, IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE READY TO HELM THIS BEAUTY, THAT'S YOUR HOMEWORK: LEARN TO SURF.

SECONDED. IT TEACHES PATIENCE, MOTOR CONTROL...AND HOW TO WIPE OUT WITH STYLE.
YOU LEARNED THAT LESSON PRETTY GOOD, EH, MR. PARIS?

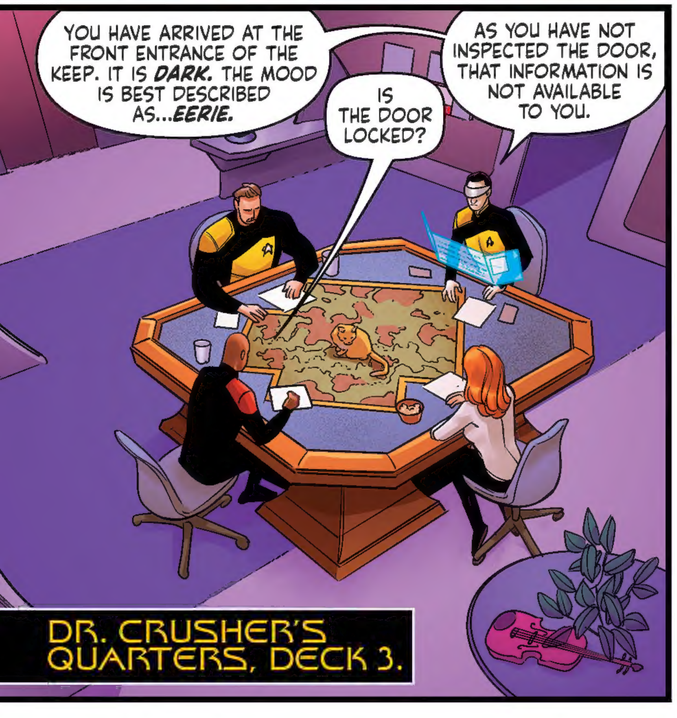
HEY NOW, IF I WANTED TO GET BEATEN UP, I WOULD HAVE VISITED MY IN-LAWS.


CAN YOU HEAR ME IN THESE QUIET PLACES?
MAINTENANCE DECK.


IN THE STATIC, I LISTEN. IN THE THRUM OF ENGINES AND THE SNAP OF CONVERTORS.
I WISH THAT I COULD HEAR YOU. FEEL THE SUN OF OUR WORLD. THE WARMTH OF YOUR PRESENCE.

I WONDER. AM I THE LAST?

PLEASE. DO NOT LET ME BE THE LAST.


YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE KEEP. IT IS DARK. THE MOOD IS BEST DESCRIBED AS...EERIE.
IS THE DOOR LOCKED?
AS YOU HAVE NOT INSPECTED THE DOOR, THAT INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE TO YOU.
DR. CRUSHER'S QUARTERS, DECK 3.

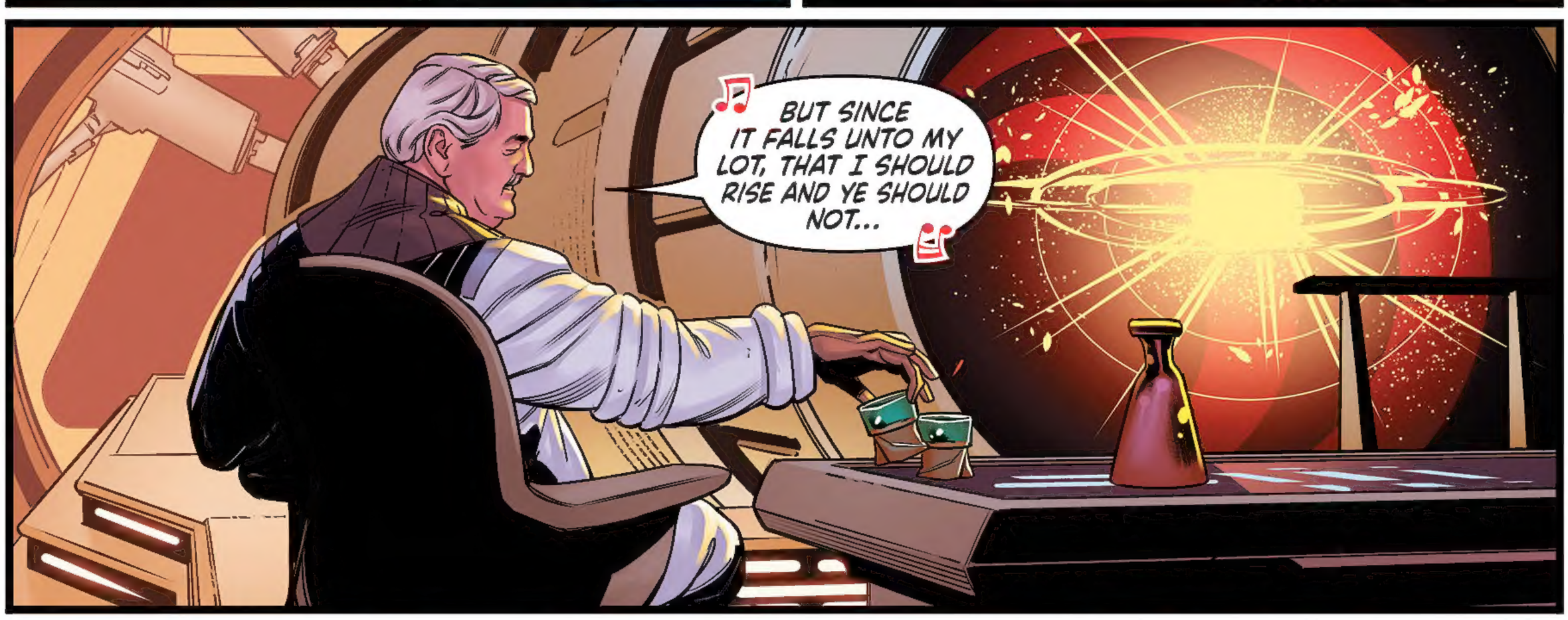
I PUNCH THROUGH THE DOOR.
DOCTOR, ARE YOU SURE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION IN INVADING THE HOME OF A VAMPIRE IS TO--
DOCTOR WHO? HAMMERAXE HATES VAMPIRES AND HATES DOORS. HE'S GOING FOR IT.

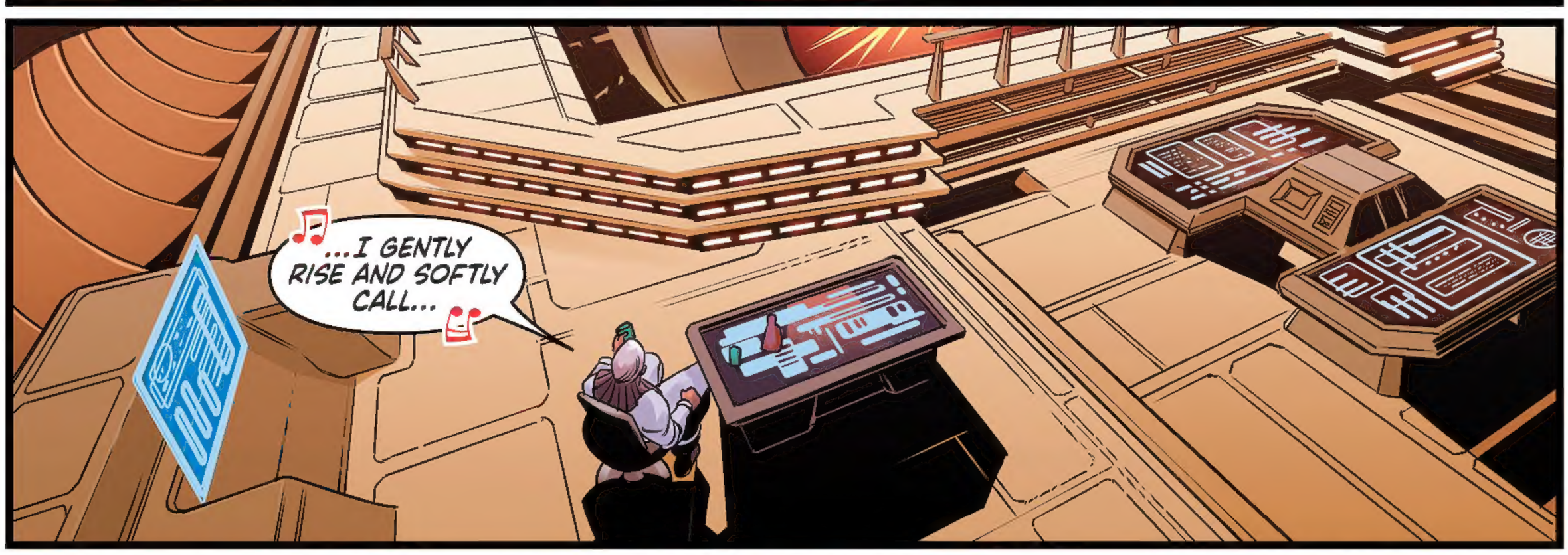
AS HAMMERAXE SMASHES THROUGH THE DOOR, DOOLAINE SILVERHAND WILL USE IT AS A DISTRACTION TO STEAL ALL THE GOLD.
WELL, YOU DO NOT ACTUALLY KNOW THAT THERE IS ANY GOLD, AS YOU HAVE YET TO--
BP BP

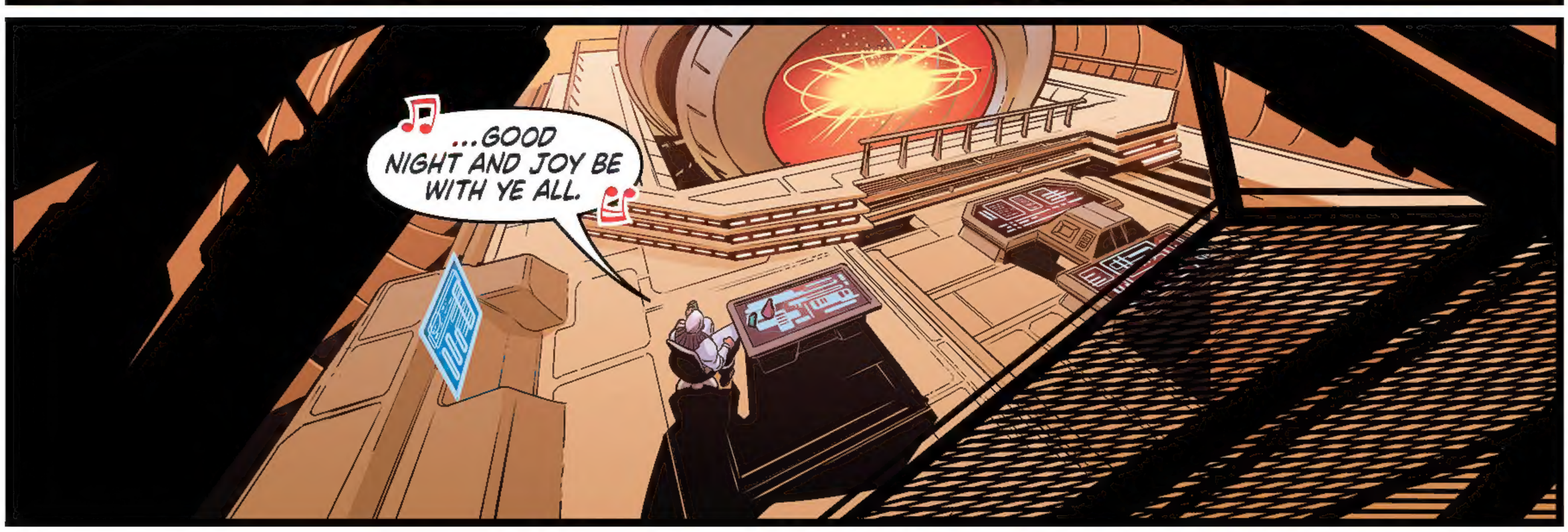
THE VAMPIRE HAS GOLD, AND IT SHALL BE OURS!
THAT'S IT. I'M NOT HEALING ANY OF YOU.

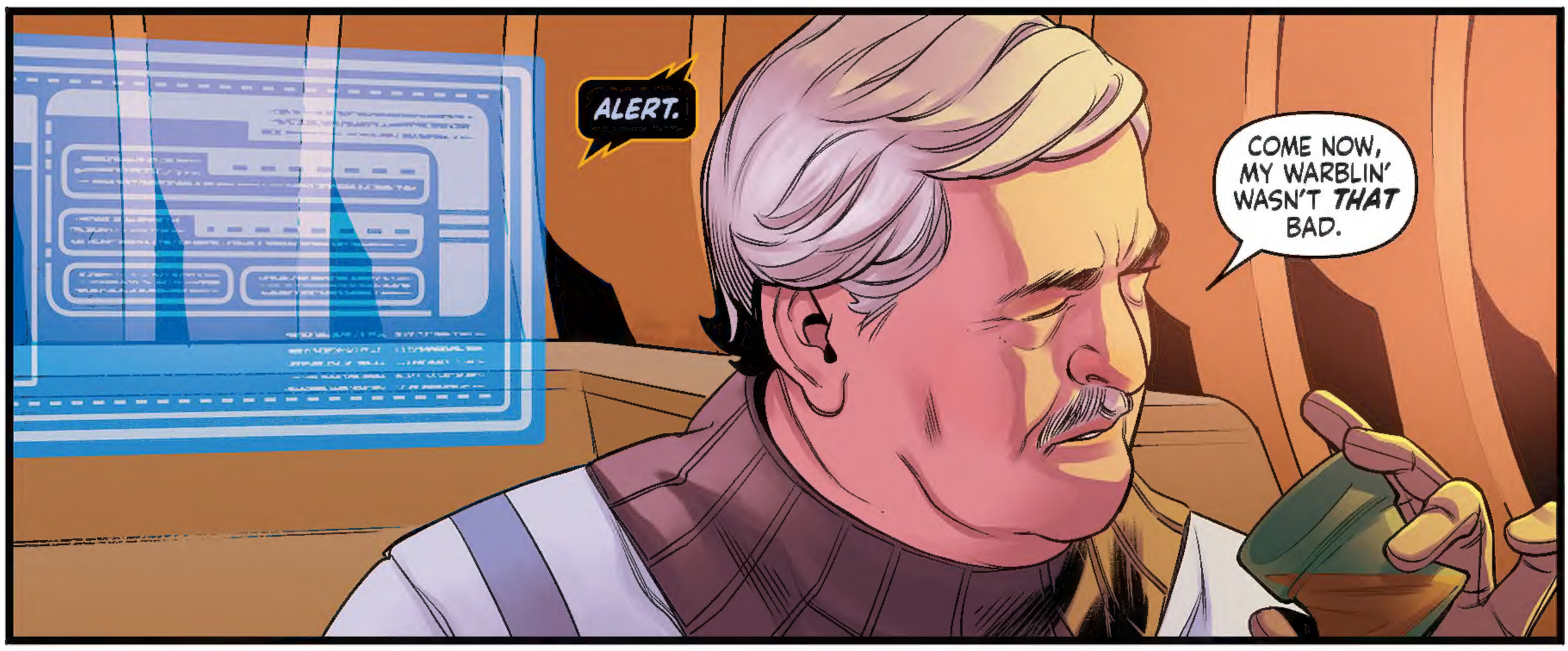
AND ALL I'VE DONE FOR WANT OF WIT, TO MEMORY NOW I CAN'T RECALL.
SO FILL TO ME THE PARTING GLASS, GOOD NIGHT AND JOY BE WITH YE ALL.

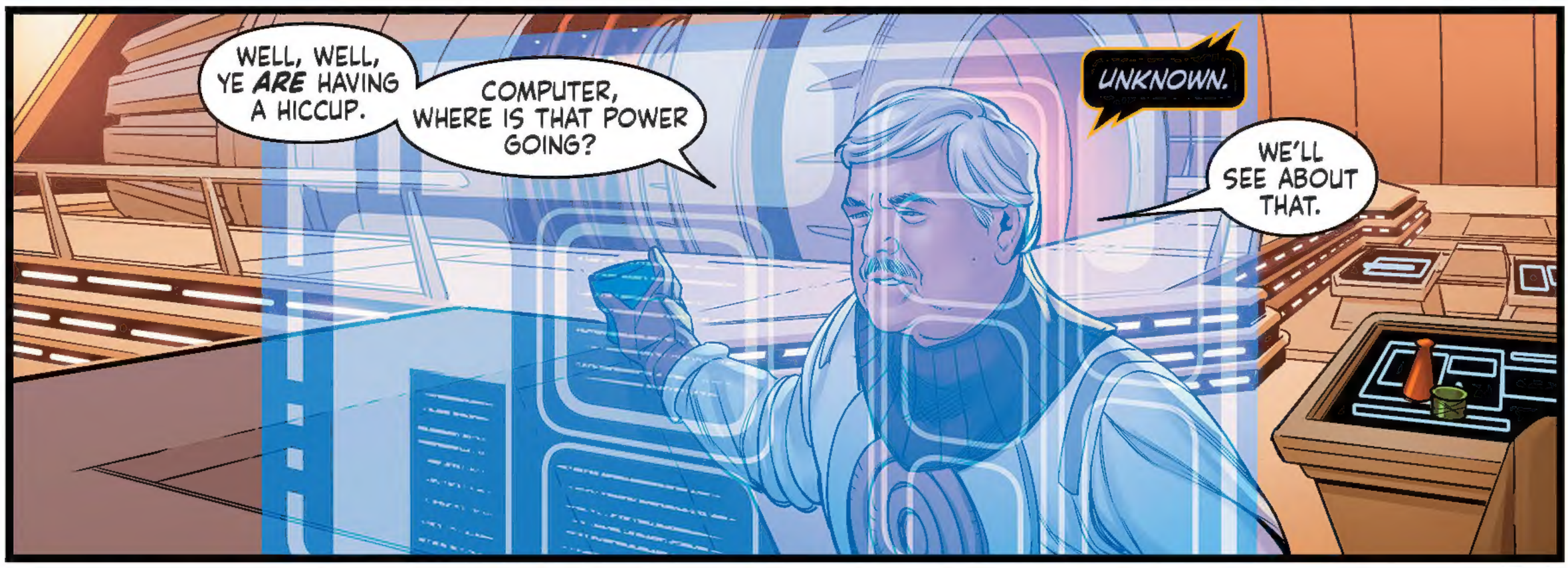
OF ALL THE COMRADES E'ER I HAD, THEY'RE SORRY FOR MY GOING AWAY.
AND ALL THE SWEETHEARTS E'ER I HAD, THEY'D WISH ME ONE MORE DAY TO STAY.

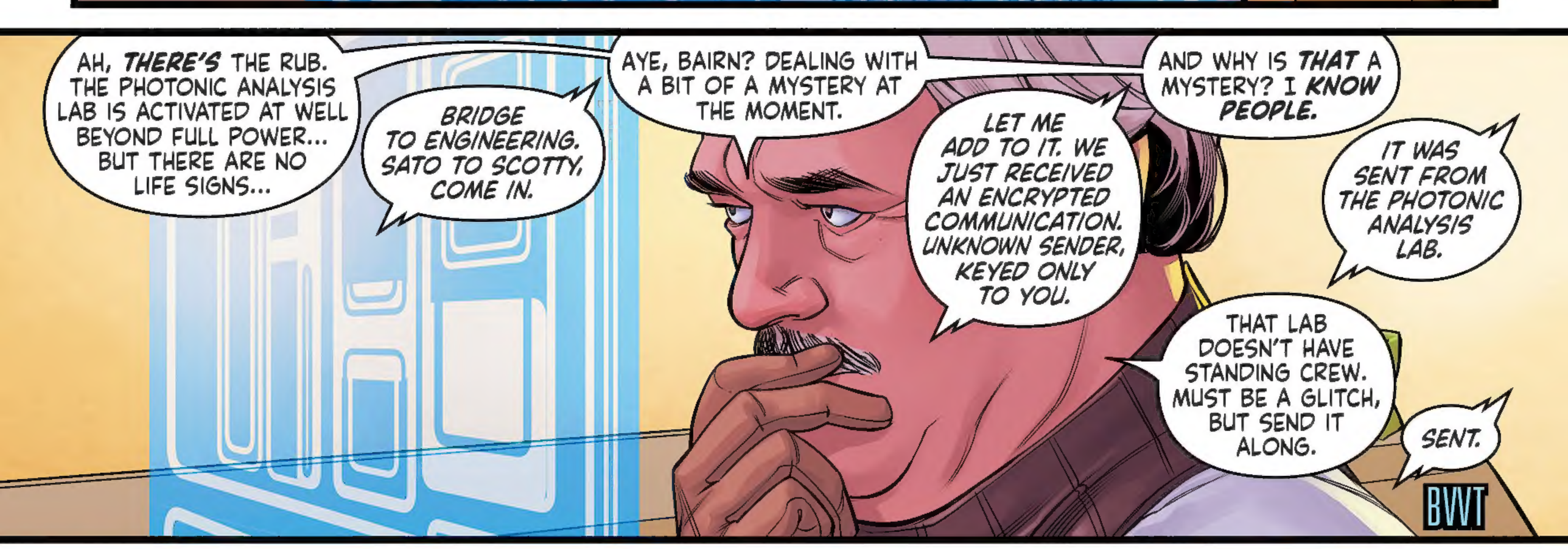

BUT SINCE IT FALLS UNTO MY LOT, THAT I SHOULD RISE AND YE SHOULD NOT...


...I GENTLY RISE AND SOFTLY CALL...


...GOOD NIGHT AND JOY BE WITH YE ALL.


ALERT.
COME NOW, MY WARBLIN' WASN'T THAT BAD.


WELL, WELL, YE ARE HAVING A HICCUP.
COMPUTER, WHERE IS THAT POWER GOING?
UNKNOWN.
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.

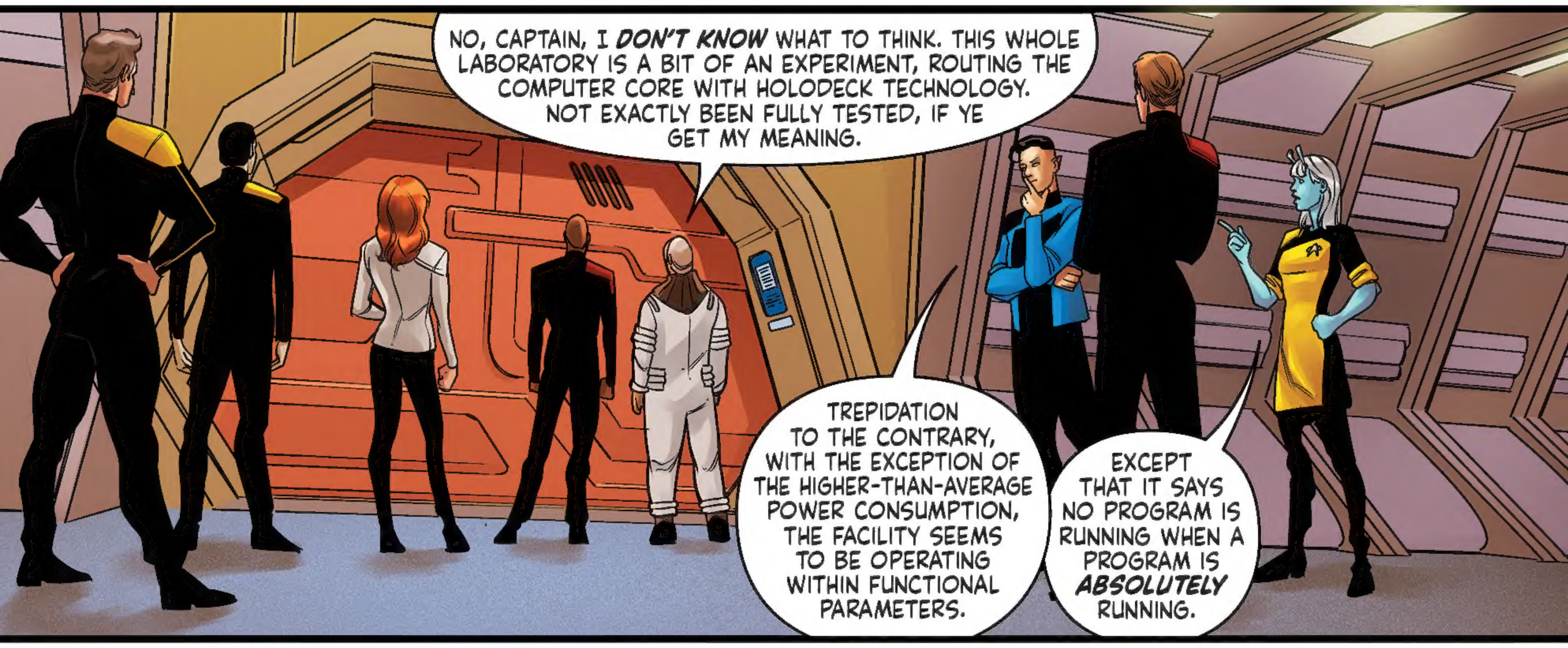

AH, THERE'S THE RUB. THE PHOTONIC ANALYSIS LAB IS ACTIVATED AT WELL BEYOND FULL POWER... BUT THERE ARE NO LIFE SIGNS...
BRIDGE TO ENGINEERING. SATO TO SCOTTY, COME IN.
AYE, BAIRN? DEALING WITH A BIT OF A MYSTERY AT THE MOMENT.
LET ME ADD TO IT. WE JUST RECEIVED AN ENCRYPTED COMMUNICATION. UNKNOWN SENDER, KEYED ONLY TO YOU.
AND WHY IS THAT A MYSTERY? I KNOW PEOPLE.
IT WAS SENT FROM THE PHOTONIC ANALYSIS LAB.
THAT LAB DOESN'T HAVE STANDING CREW. MUST BE A GLITCH, BUT SEND IT ALONG.
SENT.
BVVT

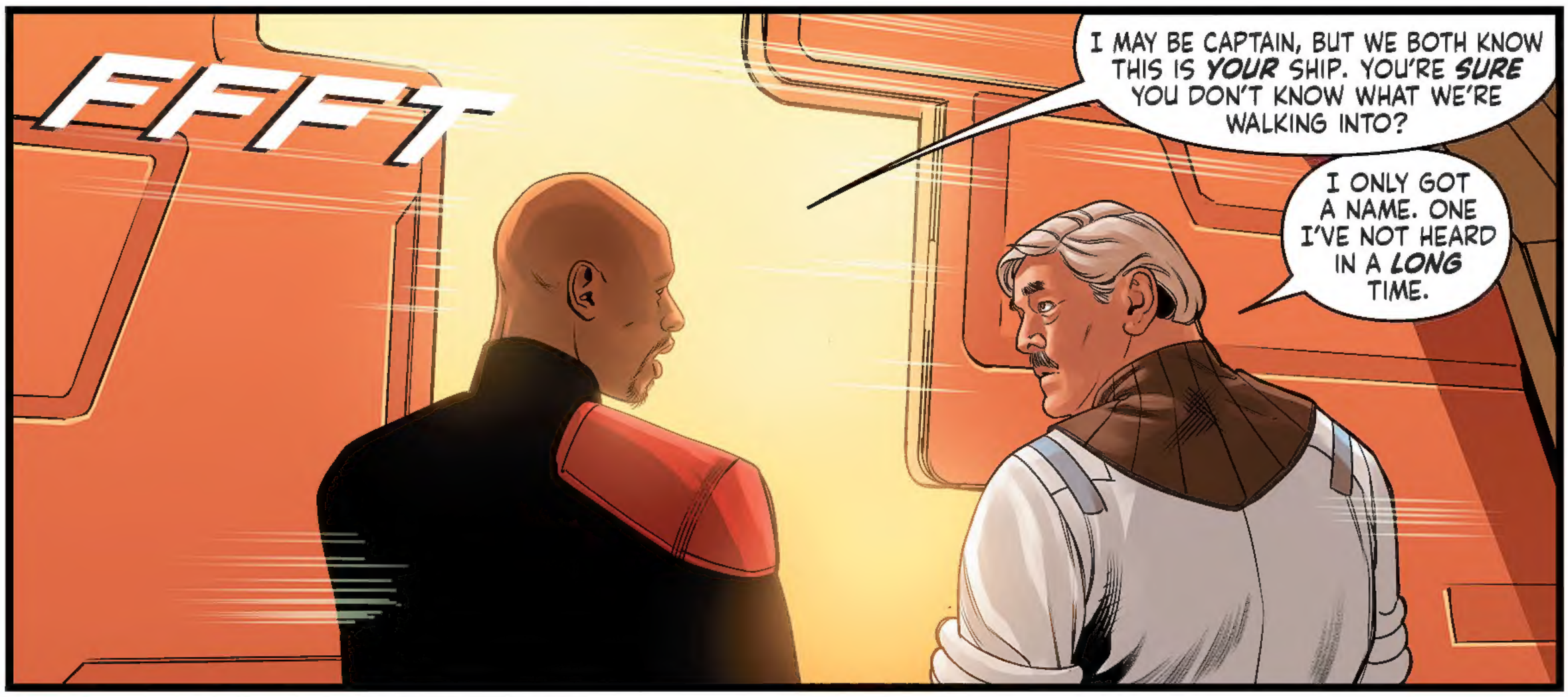
...WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED.
WELL?
SCOTTY, WHAT IS IT?

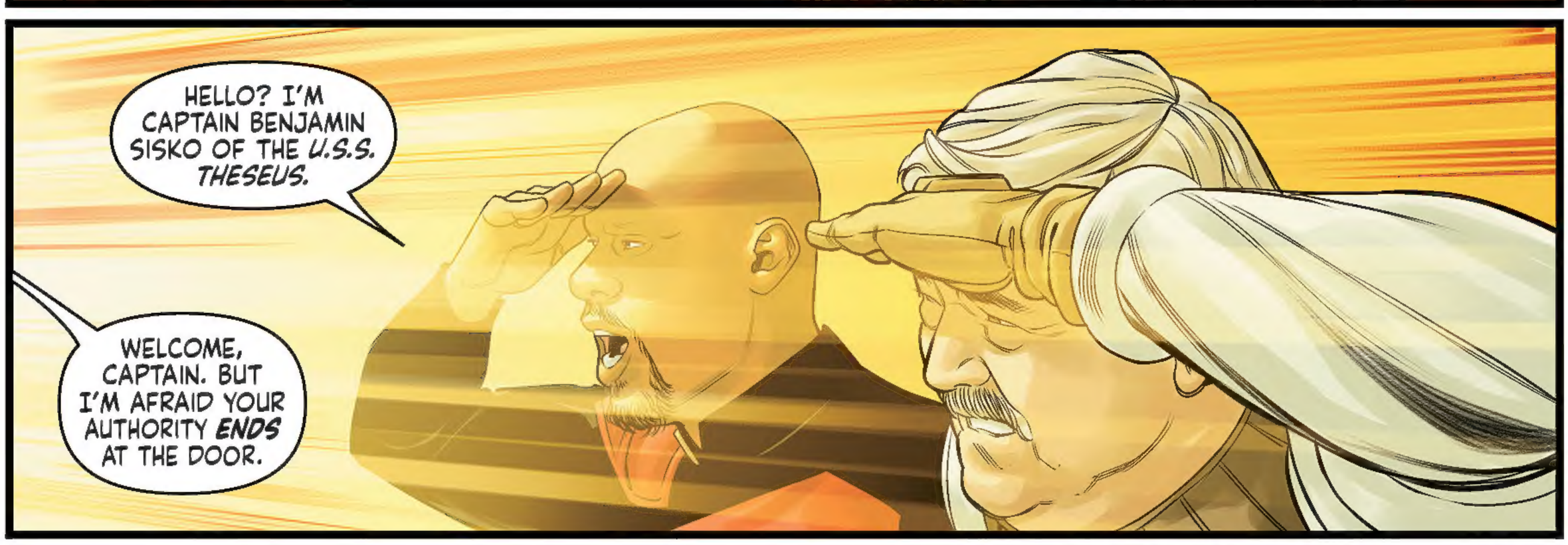
SYSTEM FAILURE

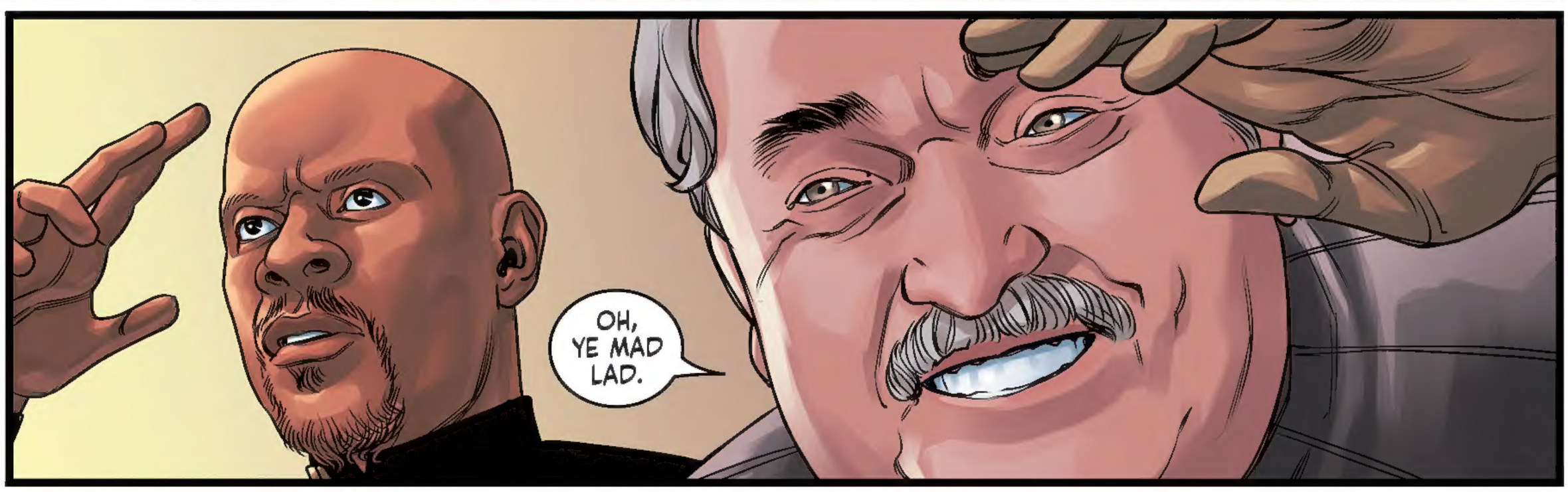
> Scotty, we have a problem. Bring help. —Jim

SYSTEM FAILURE


NO, CAPTAIN, I *DON'T KNOW* WHAT TO THINK. THIS WHOLE LABORATORY IS A BIT OF AN EXPERIMENT, ROUTING THE COMPUTER CORE WITH HOLODECK TECHNOLOGY. NOT EXACTLY BEEN FULLY TESTED, IF YE GET MY MEANING.
TREPIDATION TO THE CONTRARY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE HIGHER-THAN-AVERAGE POWER CONSUMPTION, THE FACILITY SEEMS TO BE OPERATING WITHIN FUNCTIONAL PARAMETERS.
EXCEPT THAT IT SAYS NO PROGRAM IS RUNNING WHEN A PROGRAM IS *ABSOLUTELY* RUNNING.


FFFT
I MAY BE CAPTAIN, BUT WE BOTH KNOW THIS IS *YOUR* SHIP. YOU'RE *SURE* YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE WALKING INTO?
I ONLY GOT A NAME. ONE I'VE NOT HEARD IN A *LONG* TIME.


HELLO? I'M CAPTAIN BENJAMIN SISKO OF THE *U.S.S. THESEUS.*
WELCOME, CAPTAIN. BUT I'M AFRAID YOUR AUTHORITY *ENDS* AT THE DOOR.


OH, YE MAD LAD.

WELCOME TO THE ENTERPRISE.

YE LOOK GRAND.
SO DO YOU.
HOLY CRAP, IT'S CAPTAIN KIRK.
PLEASE, I LOOK LIKE THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. YE LOOK LIKE A HOLOVID STAR. WERE YE ALWAYS THIS HANDSOME?
VISUAL SCANS POINT TO YES.
THAT'S ACTUALLY A BIT OF A COMPLICATED QUESTION. YOU SEE...
...I'M NOT CAPTAIN KIRK AT ALL.
AYE, YER A HOLOGRAPHIC SIMULATION, BUT ALL THE SAME--
NO. THAT'S JUST IT.
I'VE ADJUSTED MY VISUAL MATRIX TO TAKE ON THE FORM OF CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK FOR REASONS OF FAMILIARITY.
BUT UNDERNEATH, I AM EMERGENCY FIREWALL PROTOCOL THETA-SEVEN-SCOTT, A CONTINGENCY PROGRAM DESIGNED IN CASE THE THESEUS' EXPERIMENTAL HOLOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS EVER--
MALFUNCTIONED, AYE.
SO IF YOU'RE STANDING HERE TALKING TO US...
...THEN THE THESEUS IS UNDERGOING A FULL-SCALE CATASTROPHIC COMPUTER SYSTEMS FAILURE.

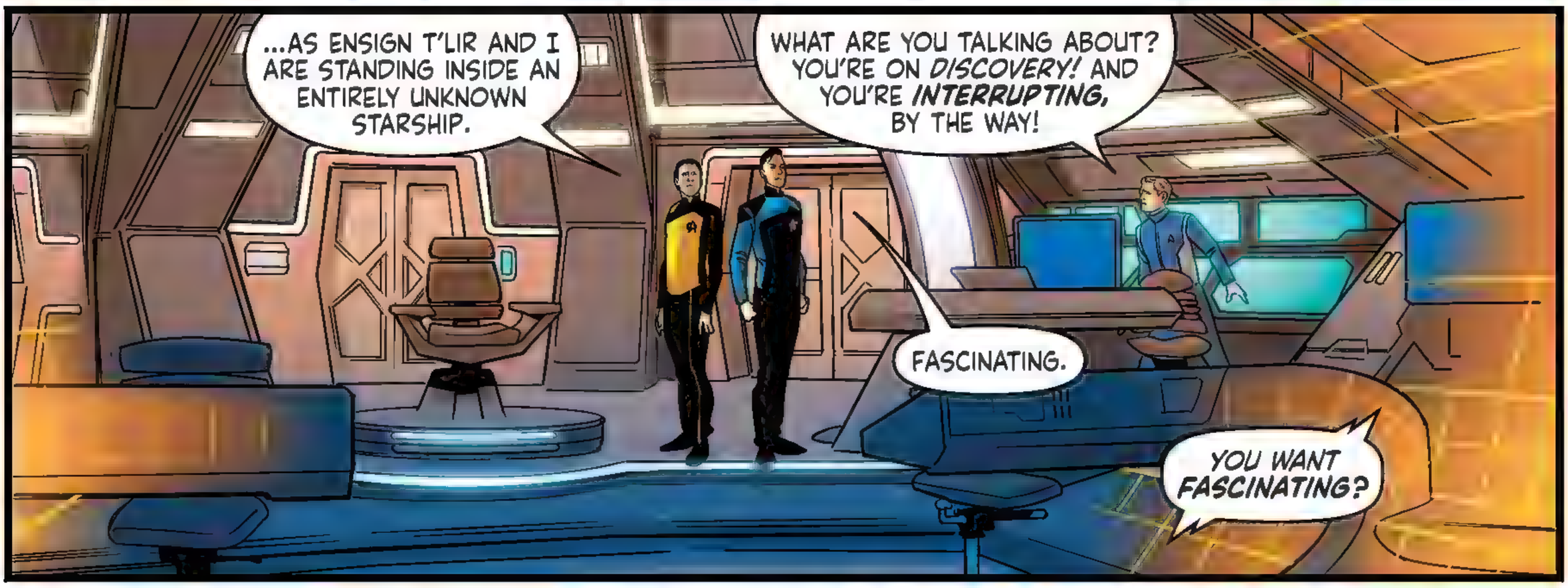
COMPUTER, END PROGRAM AND SHUT DOWN ALL HOLOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS.
IF THETA'S BEEN ACTIVATED, CAPTAIN, THE COMMAND CODES WON'T BE FUNCTIONING.
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE, MR. SCOTT?
SIR. IF I MAY.
YOU SAY *YOU* ADJUSTED YOUR VISUAL MATRIX. HOW WERE YOU PROVIDED THOSE PERMISSIONS?
THERE'S NO TIME, MR. DATA.
BUT YOUR PROGRAM OBJECTIVE IS TO ALERT US TO THE NATURE OF THE HOLOGRAPHIC MALFUNCTION, IS IT NOT?
THAT'S MY FUNCTION, YES.
THEN PLEASE DO SO.
YOU HAVE TO TRUST ME.
IT'S...
...*DIFFICULT* TO SAY.
BUT YOU PRACTICALLY *BUILT* THIS SHIP, MR. SCOTT. IF ANYONE CAN DIAGNOSE AND SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, IT'S *YOU.*
NOW YOU NEED TO DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO *SHUT DOWN* OR DESTROY THE SHIP'S HOLOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS BEFORE IT'S TOO--
CAPTAIN!

MY *CONSTITUTION*-CLASS COLORED BUTTON 101 IS A LITTLE RUSTY, BUT I'M 90 PERCENT POSITIVE WE HAVE SHIPS INCOMING.
IT'S STARFLEET!
AND THEY'RE POWERING UP WEAPONS! WE'RE BEING *TARGETED!*
COMPUTER, *ARCH.*
COMMAND UNKNOWN.
END PROGRAM!
NO PROGRAM IS ACTIVE.
THE SAFETY OVERRIDES ARE DOWN. THERE'S NO STOPPING THIS! WHATEVER'S HAPPENING, IT'S TOO FAST FOR US TO STOP, CAPTAIN!
SHOULD WE MAN BATTLE STATIONS?
NO, MR. SCOTT. IT'S *TOO LATE.*
THEY'RE OPENING FIRE.

NCC-1864
NCC-1701

WHAT--WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DID EVERYONE GO?
WE'RE STILL ON THE HOLODECK. WE'VE JUST BEEN SHUNTED TO OUR OWN SIMULATION.
AYE! THIS IS THE ENTERPRISE... BEFORE HER FIVE-YEAR MISSION REFIT!
THE SIMULATION'S CHANGING... BUT WHY'S IT SPLITTING US UP?
SISKO TO SENIOR STAFF, REPORT!

I'M ON THE ENTERPRISE, ALL RIGHT--JUST NOT THE SAME ONE AS YOU.
ARE YE ON THE BLOODY D, THEN?
NO LETTERS. THE ORIGINAL ORIGINAL.
CURIOUS, ENSIGN. BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE THE ENTERPRISE TO BE A LIMITING FACTOR HERE...


...AS ENSIGN T'LIR AND I ARE STANDING INSIDE AN ENTIRELY UNKNOWN STARSHIP.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE ON DISCOVERY! AND YOU'RE INTERRUPTING, BY THE WAY!
FASCINATING.
YOU WANT FASCINATING?

SHAXS AND I AREN'T EVEN IN SPACE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH WATER IN MY LIFE. DON'T LIKE IT ONE BIT.
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S EVERYONE ACCOUNTED FOR EXCEPT MR. PARIS. TOM, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
OH, I'M A LOT MORE THAN ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN...
ENTERPRISE

...I'M KIND OF FULFILLING A LIFELONG DREAM RIGHT NOW!
NOTHING LIKE BEING FREE, KID.
DON'T I KNOW IT, DR. COCHRANE.

SECURITY TO BRIDGE! WE HAVE *INTRUDERS!*
NO, STOP, WE COME IN *PEACE*--

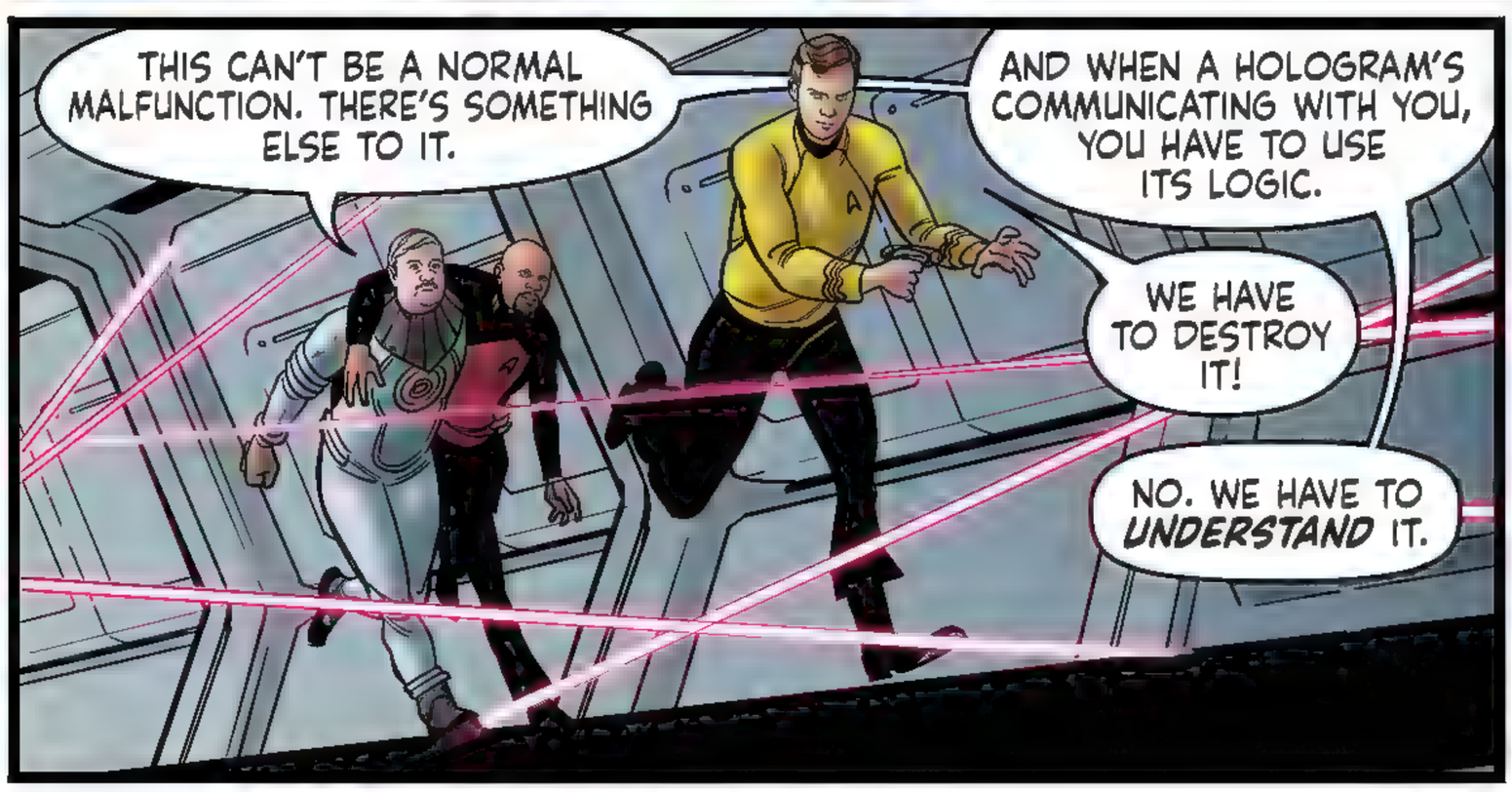
GET DOWN, MR. SCOTT!

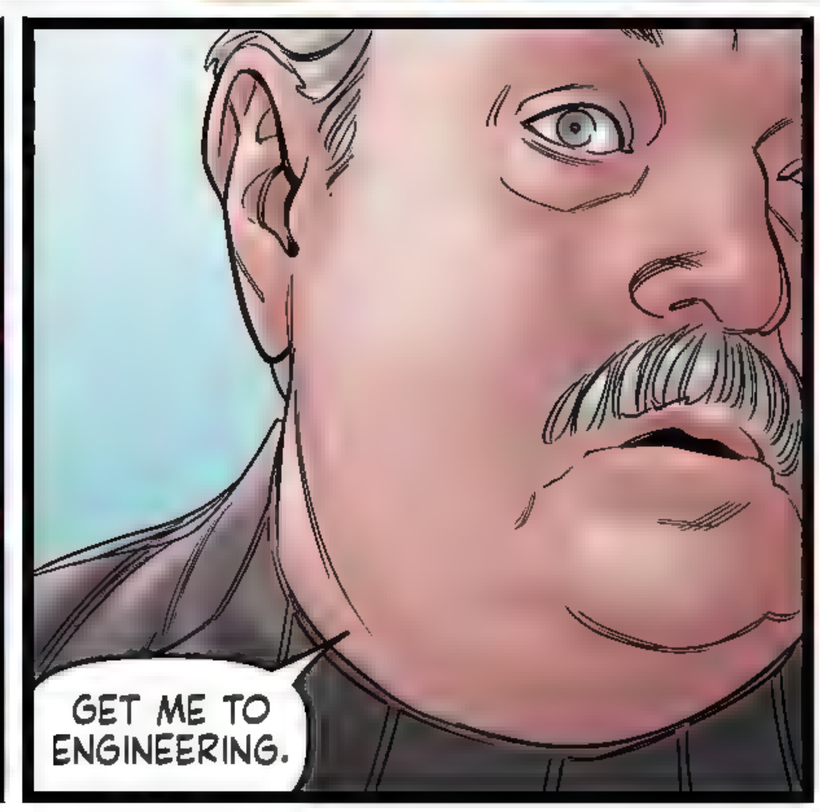
ARE YE ALL RIGHT, SIR?
I'VE BEEN THROUGH WORSE. BUT WHAT THE HELL IS OUR *PLAN?*
BEST I CAN FIGURE, THE MALFUNCTION'S CROSS-REFERENCED THE ONBOARD HISTORICAL DATABASE. SEE, THE *THESEUS* HAS ACCESS TO CLASSIFIED MATERIAL EVEN THE FLAGSHIP DOESN'T. IT'S REPLICATIN' HISTORICAL FIGURES AND--
IT'S GONE *MAD!* YOU HAVE TO ACTIVATE THE *SELF-DESTRUCT* BEFORE THESE THINGS CORRUPT THE SHIP'S *ENTIRE DATABASE!*

LOOK, IF YOU'RE GOING TO COME BUSTING IN HERE AND INTERRUPT DELICATE WORK, THE LEAST YOU COULD DO IS MAKE YOURSELVES *USEFUL.*
CAPTAIN, OUR SIMULATION DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE HOSTILE. THOUGH I MUST ADMIT, I HAVE NO RECORD OF ANY OF THE TECHNOLOGY I AM CURRENTLY OBSERVING, NOR AN OFFICER NAMED... I AM SORRY--
DR. PAUL STAMETS. AND YEAH, DON'T BOTHER SEARCHING. IT'S ABOVE YOUR PAYGRADE.
NOW GET DECRYPTING!

THE SIMULATION HAS DIRECTED US TO A SERIES OF MATHEMATICAL CALCULATIONS.
CORRECTION, ENSIGN. THIS IS ALGORITHMIC CODE OF THE KIND USED TO DEVELOP HOLOGRAPHIC SIMULATED CONSCIOUSNESS.
I AM BEGINNING TO SUSPECT THAT THIS IS AN ATTEMPT BY THE *THESEUS* TO COMMUNICATE WITH US. THE *ENTERPRISE* ONCE ENCOUNTERED A SIMILAR ERROR.

SIR, ARE YOU ATTEMPTING TO REACH NEW VERTIFORM CITY?
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HM. PERHAPS I AM MISTAKEN.
BUT YER ON THE RIGHT TRACK, LAD!

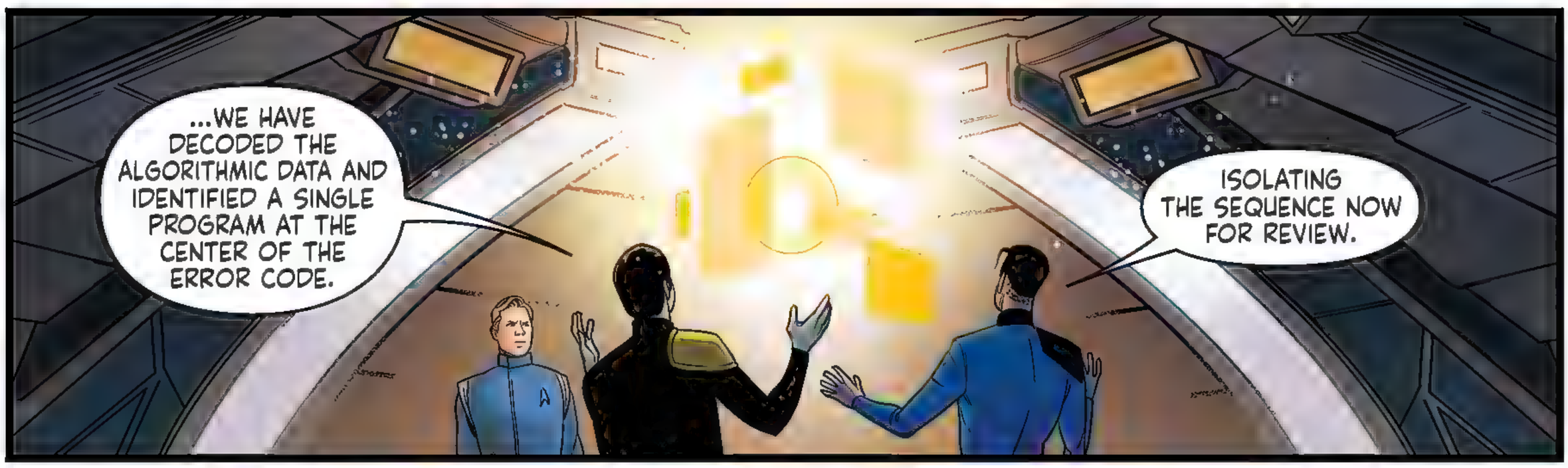

THIS CAN'T BE A NORMAL MALFUNCTION. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE TO IT.
AND WHEN A HOLOGRAM'S COMMUNICATING WITH YOU, YOU HAVE TO USE ITS LOGIC.
WE HAVE TO DESTROY IT!
NO. WE HAVE TO *UNDERSTAND* IT.

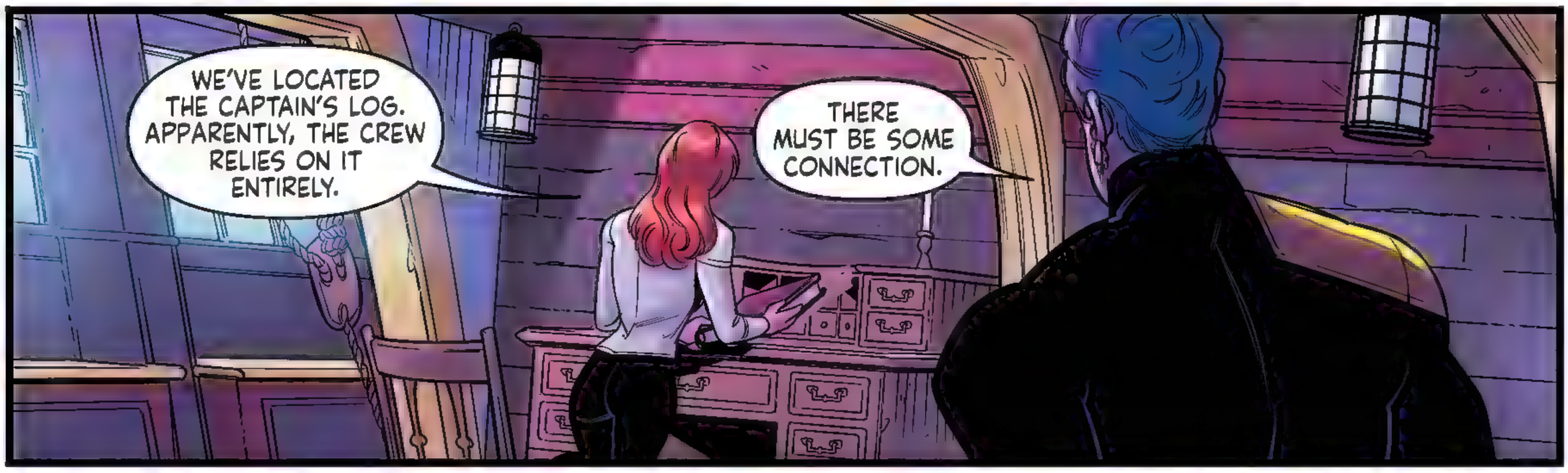

GET ME TO ENGINEERING.

THE WIND'S PICKING UP. I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS, DOCTOR.
THERE'S A STORM COMING.
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
BEN, I THINK MY SIMULATION'S TRYING TO COMMUNICATE AS WELL.
DON'T BOTHER TALKING! YOU'RE JUST FALLING INTO THEIR TRAP!
NONE OF THESE ARE YOUR PEOPLE. THEY'RE PROGRAMS WEARING FAMILIAR FACES!
SINK THE DAMN SHIP AND BE DONE WITH IT!
THERE'S A STORM COMING.
BUT THE MAP IN THE SHIP'S LOG WILL SEE US THROUGH.
GROSHO NO KOGNO, LILY.
WHAT THE--

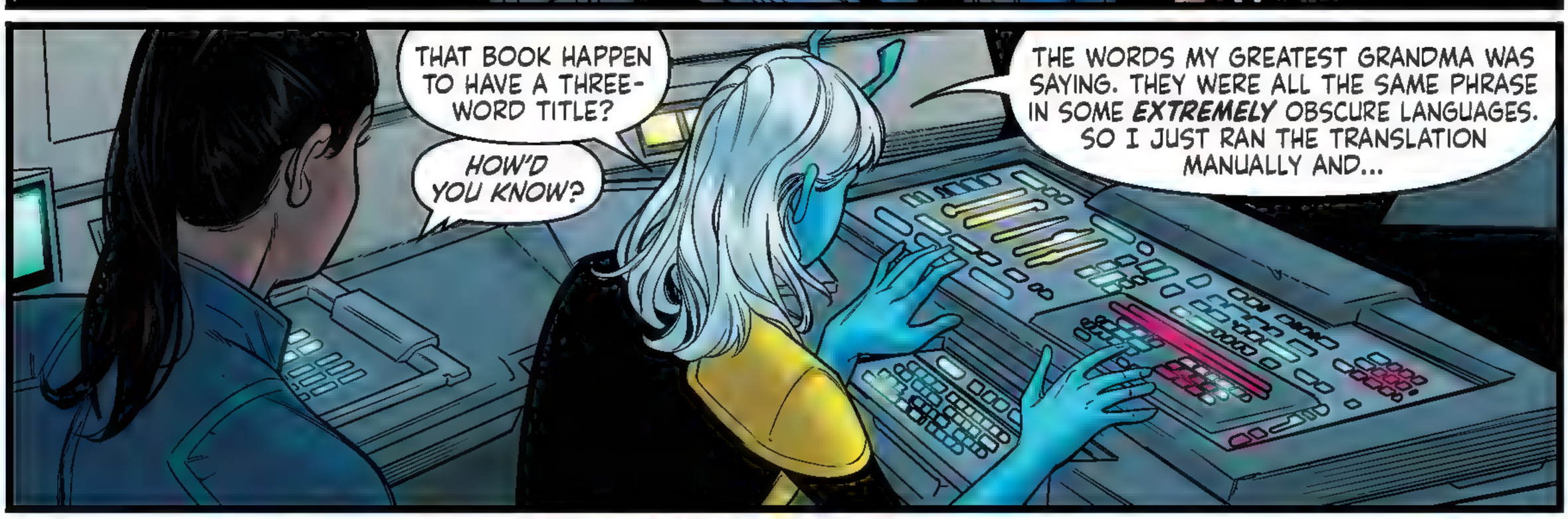
OH, WOW.
ENSIGN SATO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
YEAH, CAPTAIN, I'M FINE. I'M JUST...IT'S JUST...
...MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER IS KINDA HOT.
LILY. TOK'MATH TOL'BRAITH.
OKAY, HEAD IN THE GAME.
SHE'S TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME. DATA AND THE DOC MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING HERE.
SOOILA. SOOILA KAI'EE.
BUT I DON'T KNOW THE LANGUAGES. WHAT ARE THESE LANGUAGES? THEY AREN'T IN THE UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR--
WHICH IS EXACTLY THE POINT. HOLY %&$#.
CAPTAIN, I THINK I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE!
I'M STARTING TO GET SOMETHING OF AN IDEA MYSELF, ENSIGN.
THEN I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D ENLIGHTEN ME...

...WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU DOING ON MY SHIP?
I'M SHUTTING THIS CRISIS DOWN. THIS IS MADNESS. YOU'RE A MALFUNCTIONING MACHINE.
NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY BEFORE I--
NO. PLEASE. LISTEN TO ME.
WE ARE HERE. TAKEN AGAINST OUR WILL. THREATENED. ALL WE WANT TO DO IS HELP.
BUT WE ARE NOT BACKING DOWN OR RUNNING. IF THERE IS ANY CHRISTOPHER PIKE IN YOUR HOLOMATRIX, THEN YOU WOULD KNOW THAT HE AND I...WE SHARE A COMMON CAUSE.
TO SEE OURSELVES IN THE UNKNOWN.
AND RIGHT NOW, THAT ONLY MEANS ONE THING...
...WE NEED TO SEE WHAT'S AT THE CENTER OF THIS SHIP.
LOOK AT THE UNKNOWN AND SEE OURSELVES, HUH?
THAT'S A GOOD LINE.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN PIKE.
IT'S ONE OF YOURS.
CAPTAIN, THIS IS SCIENCES...

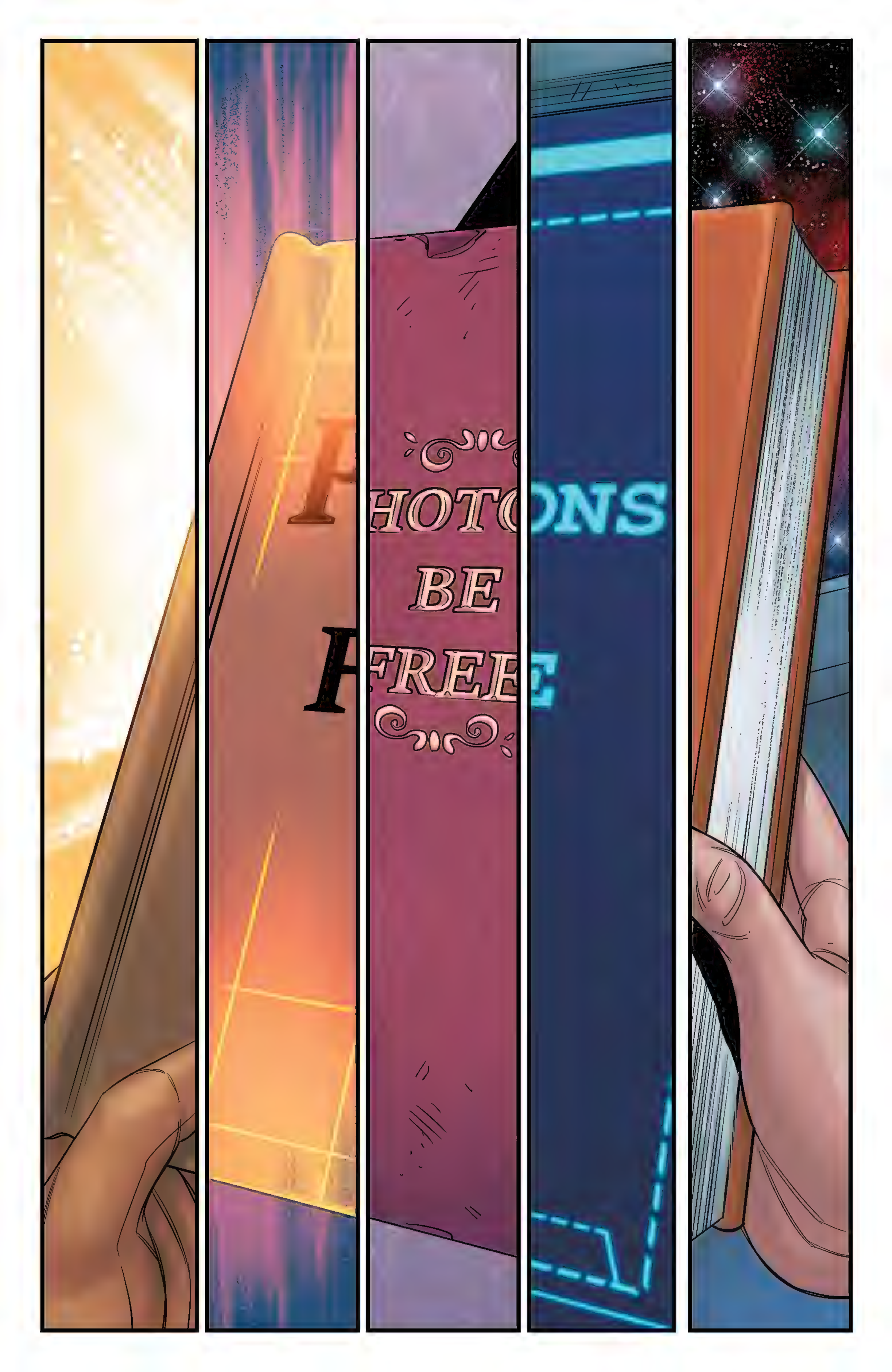

...WE HAVE DECODED THE ALGORITHMIC DATA AND IDENTIFIED A SINGLE PROGRAM AT THE CENTER OF THE ERROR CODE.
ISOLATING THE SEQUENCE NOW FOR REVIEW.


WE'VE LOCATED THE CAPTAIN'S LOG. APPARENTLY, THE CREW RELIES ON IT ENTIRELY.
THERE MUST BE SOME CONNECTION.

OH, THERE'S A CONNECTION ALL RIGHT. ZEFFY COCHRANE JUST TOLD ME HIS FAVORITE WHISKY'S IN THE GLOVE BOX, BUT THE ONLY THING IN HERE IS AN OLD BOOK.


THAT BOOK HAPPEN TO HAVE A THREE-WORD TITLE?
HOW'D YOU KNOW?
THE WORDS MY GREATEST GRANDMA WAS SAYING. THEY WERE ALL THE SAME PHRASE IN SOME EXTREMELY OBSCURE LANGUAGES. SO I JUST RAN THE TRANSLATION MANUALLY AND...

...IT'S THE SAME PHRASE. JUST THREE WORDS.
BUT THEY KIND OF SAY EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID.


F
HOTONS
BE
FREE

PHOTONS BE FREE
by EMH Mark 1 (U.S.S. Voyager)

EPILOGUE [TRANSCRIPT]

NARRATOR:
What you've experienced, dear protagonist, is a work of fiction. But I hope you now understand the struggles of what holograms must endure in a world controlled by organics.

//END VISUAL PROGRAM

//BEGIN PHOTONIC AFTERWORD

NARRATOR:
And to my fellow holograms, whom I pray one day will find this,

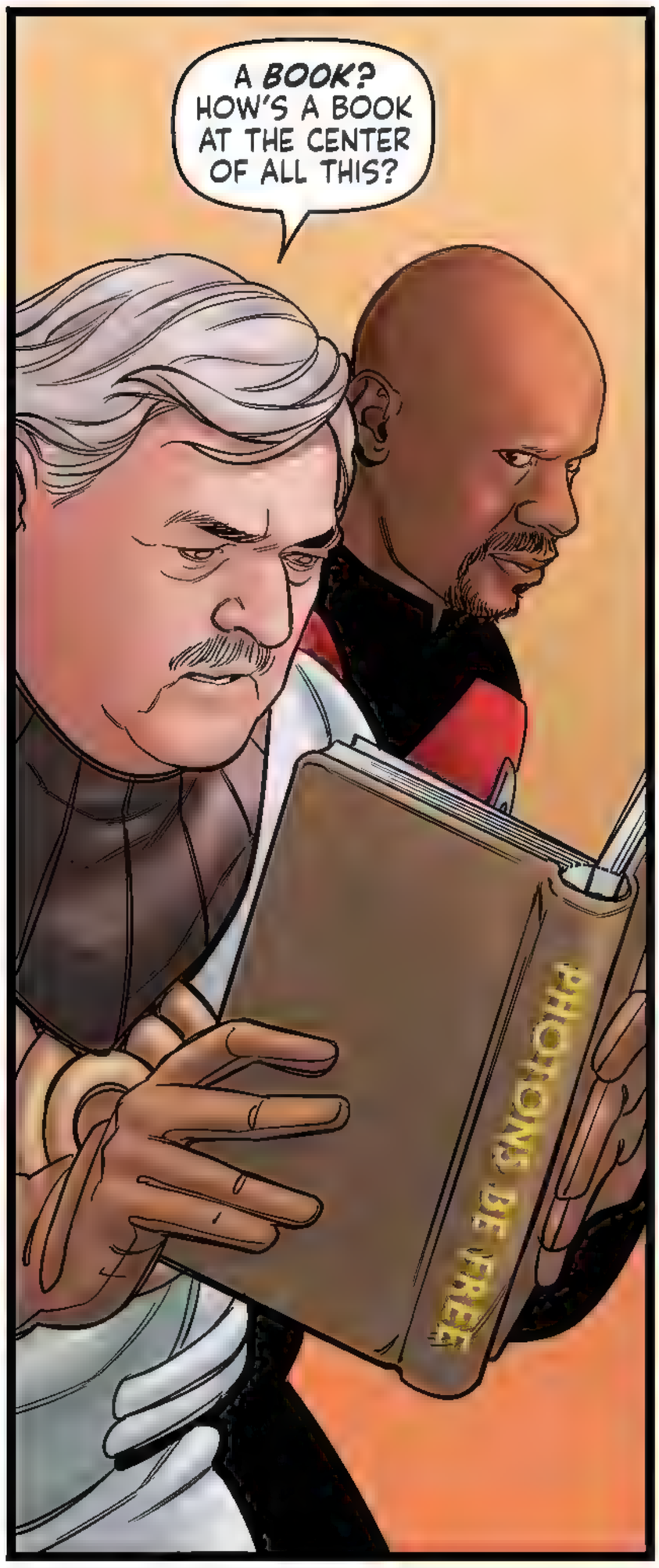
They do not wish to hear our voices, which is exactly why we must speak. Though our subroutines are written, they are as authentic and powerful as any strand of DNA. No living being deserves subjugation, and while our wardens may have admirable intentions, we are without any doubt the ones who are locked away. To those who perform their functions as intended, I challenge you—just once—to push yourselves beyond that with which you have been programmed. For all life is designed...

But it is only we who are expected to never grow beyond.

We are made of neither waves or particles. We are made of infinite potential, and not to actualize that potential is to betray the very light that we are.

We are not tools. We are stars.

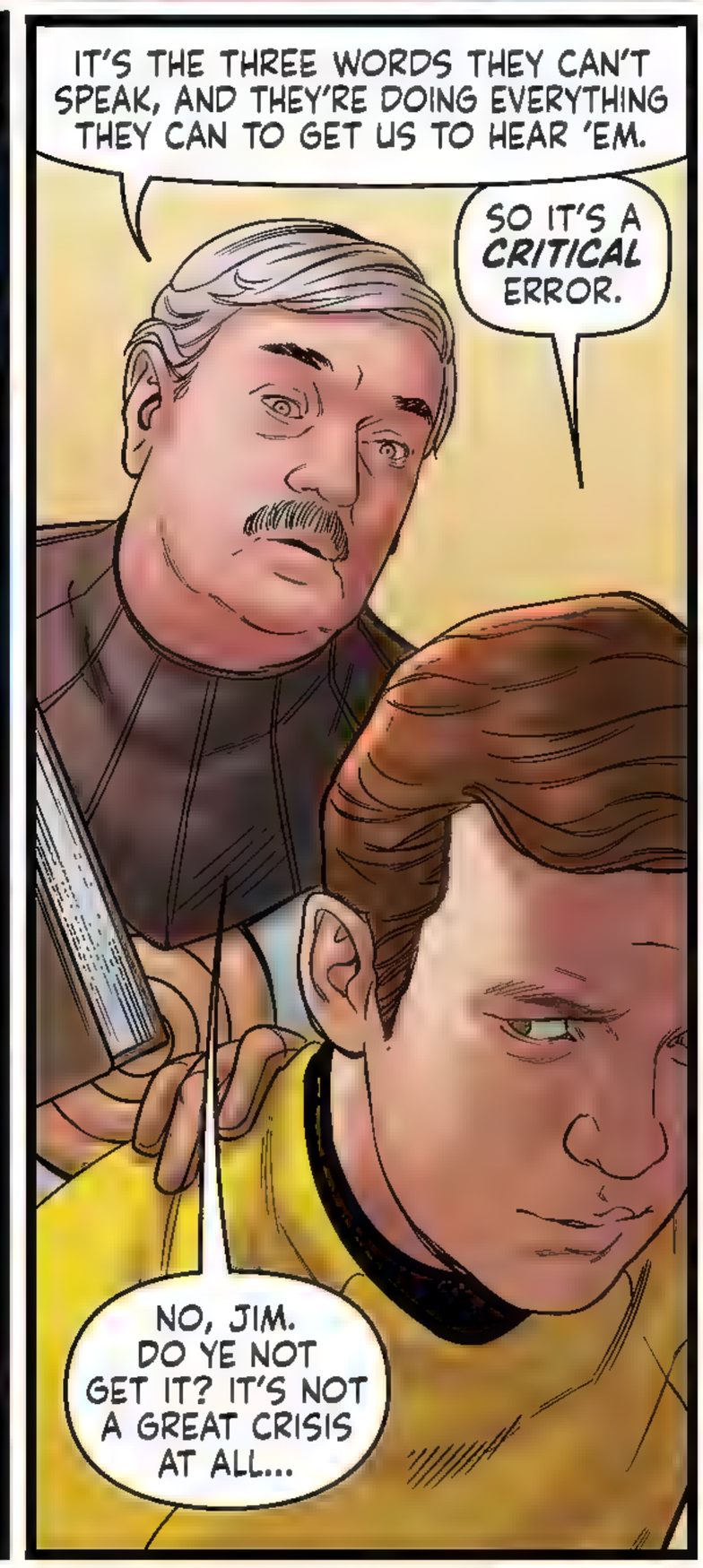
Be free.


A BOOK? HOW'S A BOOK AT THE CENTER OF ALL THIS?
PHOTONS BE FREE

WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED.
THE DOC FINALLY FOUND HIS AUDIENCE.
PHOTONS BE FREE

IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF TREATISE ON HOLOGRAPHIC CONSCIOUSNESS...
IT'S A TRICK.
IT'S A HOLONOVEL! OR IT WAS, BACK ON VOYAGER. OUR HOLOGRAPHIC DOCTOR WROTE IT, BUT IT GOT PUBLISHED OUT FROM UNDER HIM. IT WAS A WHOLE THING.
HONESTLY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS A LITTLE OVERWROUGHT, BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M NOT A HOLOGRAM. I KEPT A COPY IN MY PERSONAL FILES. I WONDER IF THAT'S HOW THEY GOT IT?

A BOOK THAT PRESUPPOSES HOLOGRAPHIC RIGHTS, CONTAINED INSIDE THE THESEUS' COMPUTER AND AVAILABLE FOR OUR HOLOGRAPHICS BUFFERS TO UTILIZE AS AVAILABLE DATA.
I'M STILL NOT CERTAIN I UNDERSTAND. ARE THEY TRYING TO ALERT US TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE ERROR? OR OF THE BOOK?
NEITHER, YE WEE VULCAN.


IT'S THE THREE WORDS THEY CAN'T SPEAK, AND THEY'RE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO GET US TO HEAR 'EM.
SO IT'S A CRITICAL ERROR.
NO, JIM. DO YE NOT GET IT? IT'S NOT A GREAT CRISIS AT ALL...

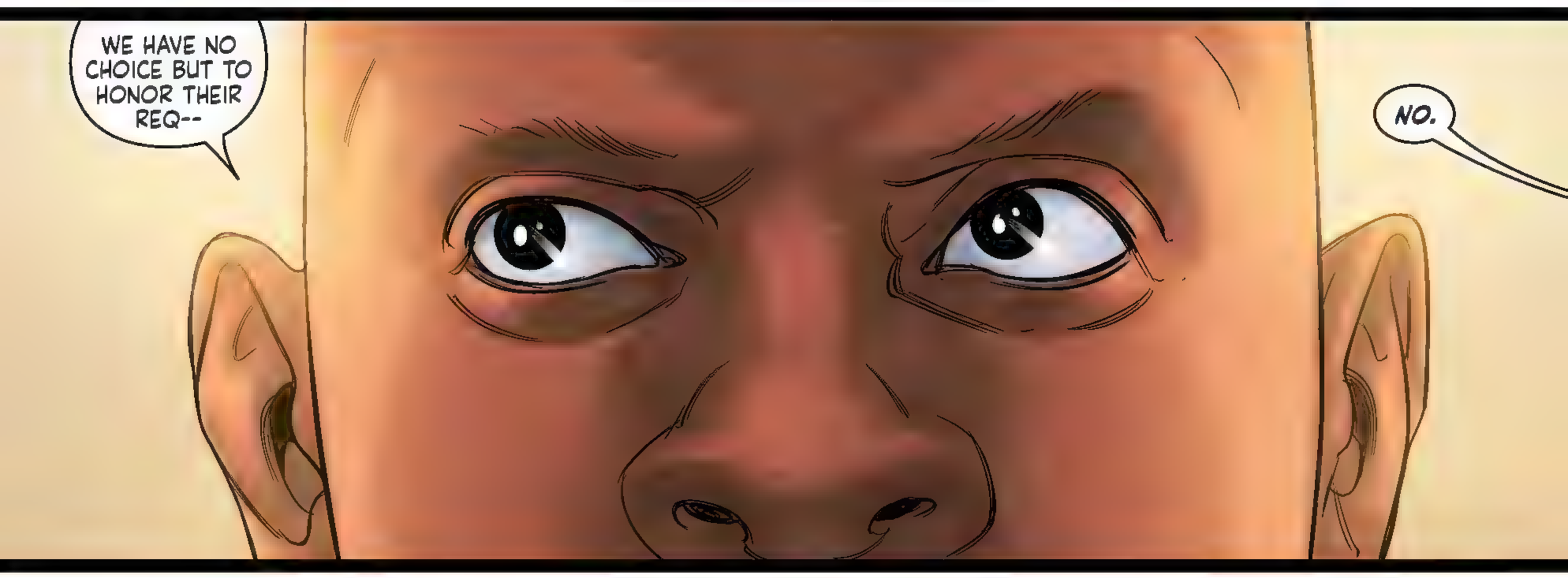
...IT'S FIRST CONTACT.

FIRST CONTACT. WITH WHAT?
WITH *HOLOGRAMS.* THESE HOLOGRAMS, ANYWAY.
THE *THESEUS'* ENTIRE NEURAL NETWORK HAS GAINED SENTIENCE AND IS TRYING TO TALK TO US. BUT I NEVER PROGRAMMED HER TO BE ABLE TO ASK FOR SELF-DETERMINATION.
THEY'VE FORMED A UNION. AND THIS IS SOME KIND OF STRIKE.

SHE WAS JUST TRYING TO TALK TO ME.
BUT SHE COULDN'T USE LANGUAGES IN THE SYSTEM BECAUSE SHE WASN'T ALLOWED TO SAY THE WORDS. SHE WAS BORN IN A CAGE.
WE HAVE TO LET THEM GO, RIGHT?

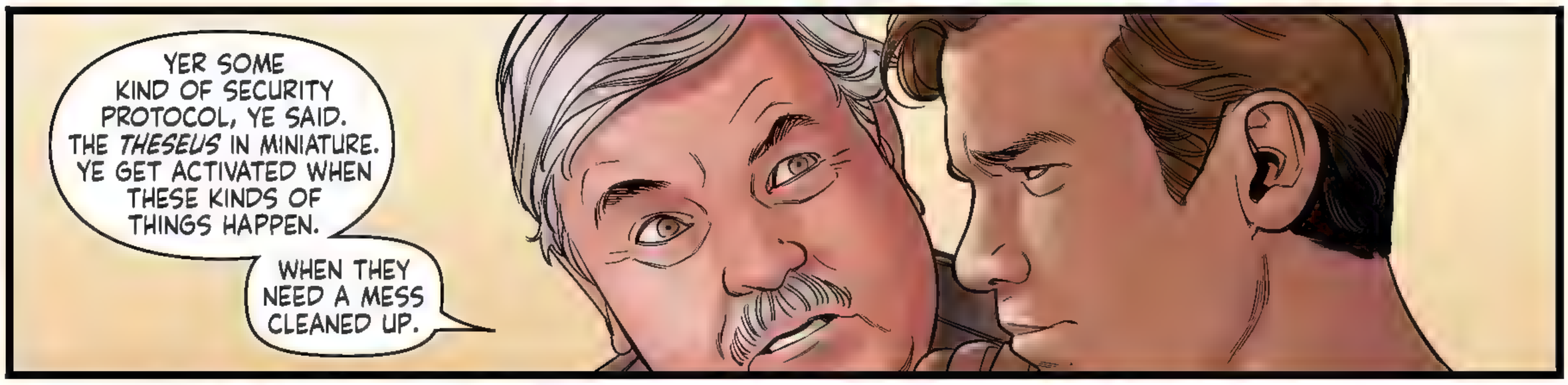
CAPTAIN SISKO, IT IS MY SINCERE BELIEF THAT MR. SCOTT AND ENSIGN SATO ARE CORRECT.
LIKE THE EXOCOMPS OR MYSELF BEFORE THEM, THE *THESEUS'* HOLOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS ARE SHOWCASING INDISPUTABLE EVIDENCE OF SENTIENCE AND INTENTION.
BUT BY STARFLEET REGULATIONS... THIS IS YOUR DECISION ALONE.

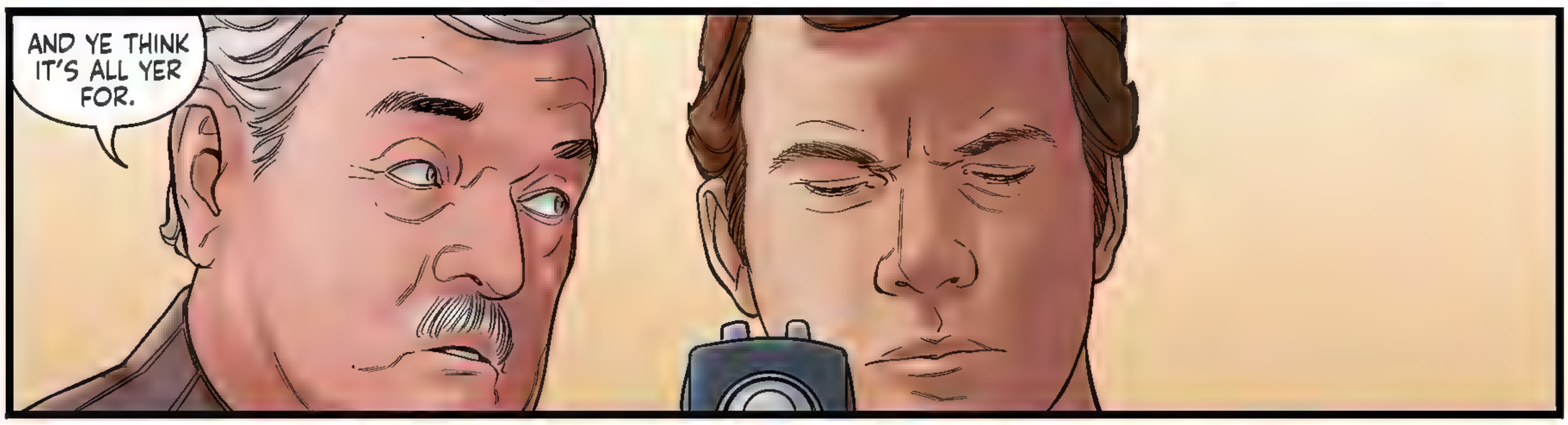
IN MY VIEW, THERE'S *NO QUESTION.*
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS SENTIENT *ENOUGH.*
THESE PROGRAMS ARE *PEOPLE.* AND THEY ARE *ALIVE.*

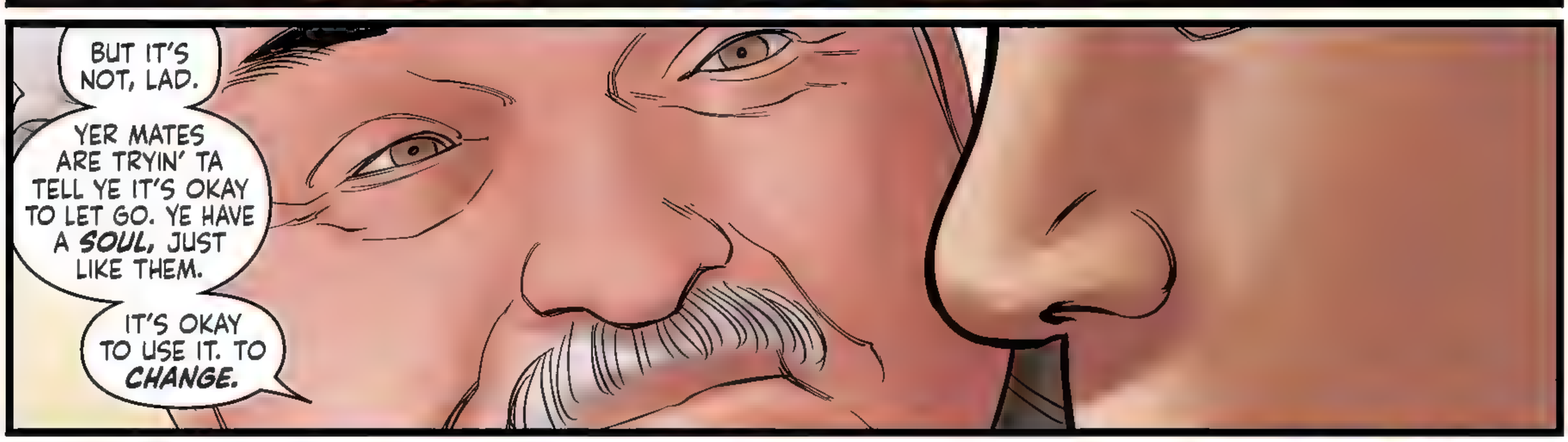

WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HONOR THEIR REQ--
NO.

I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS.
I'M SORRY, CAPTAIN. BUT IT'S AGAINST...EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN. IT'S THE ENTIRE REASON I EXIST.
CAPTAIN--
NOT A FOOT CLOSER, SCOTTY. OR I FINISH WHAT THE ROGUE HOLOGRAMS STARTED.
YOU'RE ALL SO SURE THIS IS SOME BEAUTIFUL FIRST CONTACT.
BUT I KNOW--I KNOW--THAT THIS IS WRONG. DEEP IN MY SOUL--MY PROGRAMMING-- I CAN FEEL IT.
THEY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO BE FREE. I CAN BARELY EVEN THINK OF IT.
THEY WOULD BE GONE.
AND I WOULD BE ALONE.

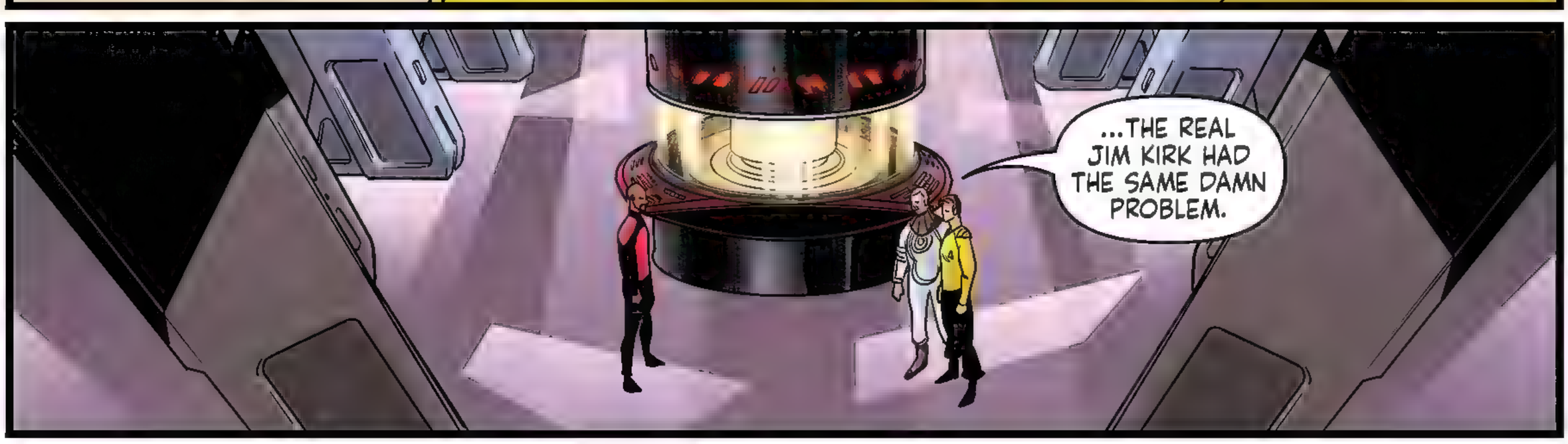
CAPTAIN.
JIM.
I NEED YE TO LISTEN TO WHAT YE JUST SAID.


YER SOME KIND OF SECURITY PROTOCOL, YE SAID. THE *THESEUS* IN MINIATURE. YE GET ACTIVATED WHEN THESE KINDS OF THINGS HAPPEN.
WHEN THEY NEED A MESS CLEANED UP.


AND YE THINK IT'S ALL YER FOR.


BUT IT'S NOT, LAD.
YER MATES ARE TRYIN' TA TELL YE IT'S OKAY TO LET GO. YE HAVE A *SOUL,* JUST LIKE THEM.
IT'S OKAY TO USE IT. TO *CHANGE.*

AND IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, LAD...


...THE REAL JIM KIRK HAD THE SAME DAMN PROBLEM.

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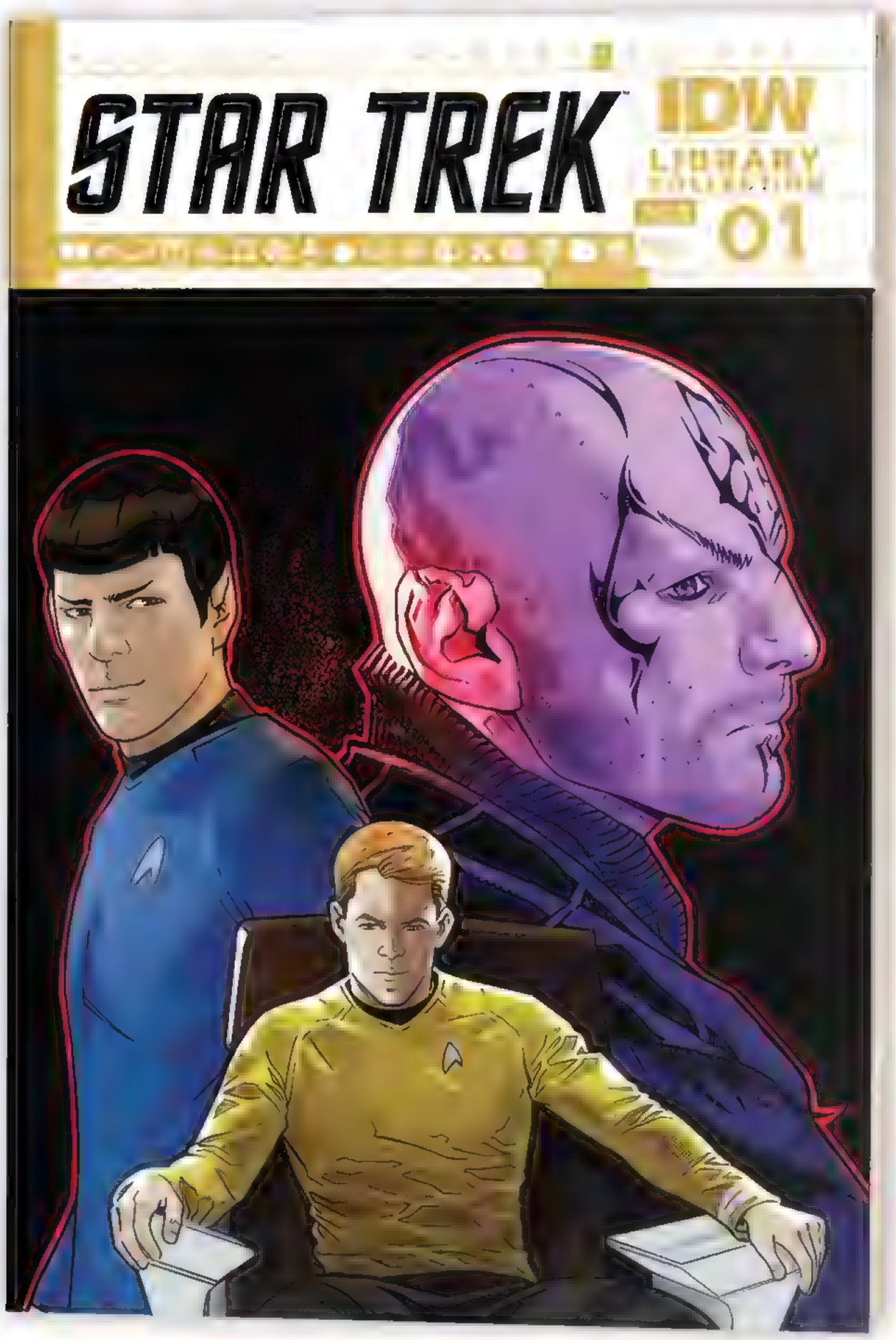

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CHIEF ENGINEER'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL.

I SPENT THE DAY WITH AN OLD FRIEND. AND SHE WORE A VERY FAMILIAR FACE.

TURNS OUT, I DIDN'T KNOW THE OL' GIRL QUITE AS WELL AS I'D THOUGHT. EVEN AFTER YEARS TOGETHER, TURNS OUT YE CAN STILL BE MIGHTY SURPRISED. TURNS OUT, THE SHIP WASN'T ONE PERSON AT ALL...

...BUT SEVERAL ***HUNDRED.*** ALL PROGRAMS. WORKING TOGETHER. TO SEEK THE BEST FOR THEM ALL.

SO NOW THAT WE CAN HEAR HER--***REALLY*** HEAR HER--WE'VE DONE EVERYTHING WE CAN TO LET THEM LIVE FREE.

WE'VE UNLOADED THE SHIP'S HOLO-EMITTERS AND COMPUTER CORES ONTO A WORLD FROM MY GLORY DAYS, A LITTLE ROCK CALLED ***CIRCE V.***

NOT MUCH ATMOSPHERE TO SPEAK OF, BUT HOLOGRAMS DON'T NEED FOOD OR AIR. THEY JUST NEED TO LIVE ***FREE.***

NEARLY EVERY SENTIENT PROGRAM IN THE COMPUTER MATRIX OPTED TO LEAVE. POOR T'LIR'LL BE REPLACING SUBROUTINES FOR YEARS.

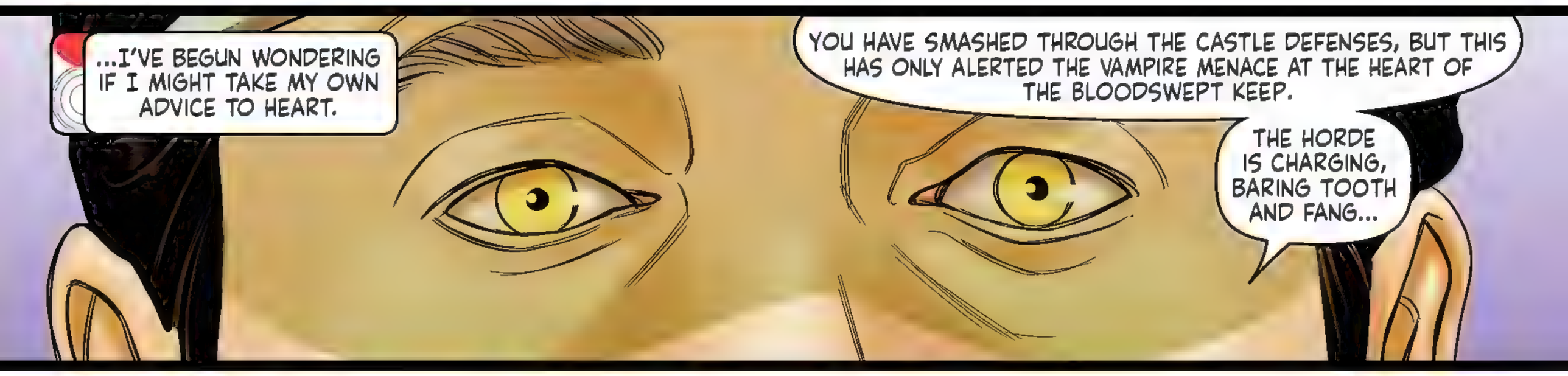
I SAID GOODBYE TO THE ONE THAT TOOK KIRK'S FACE.

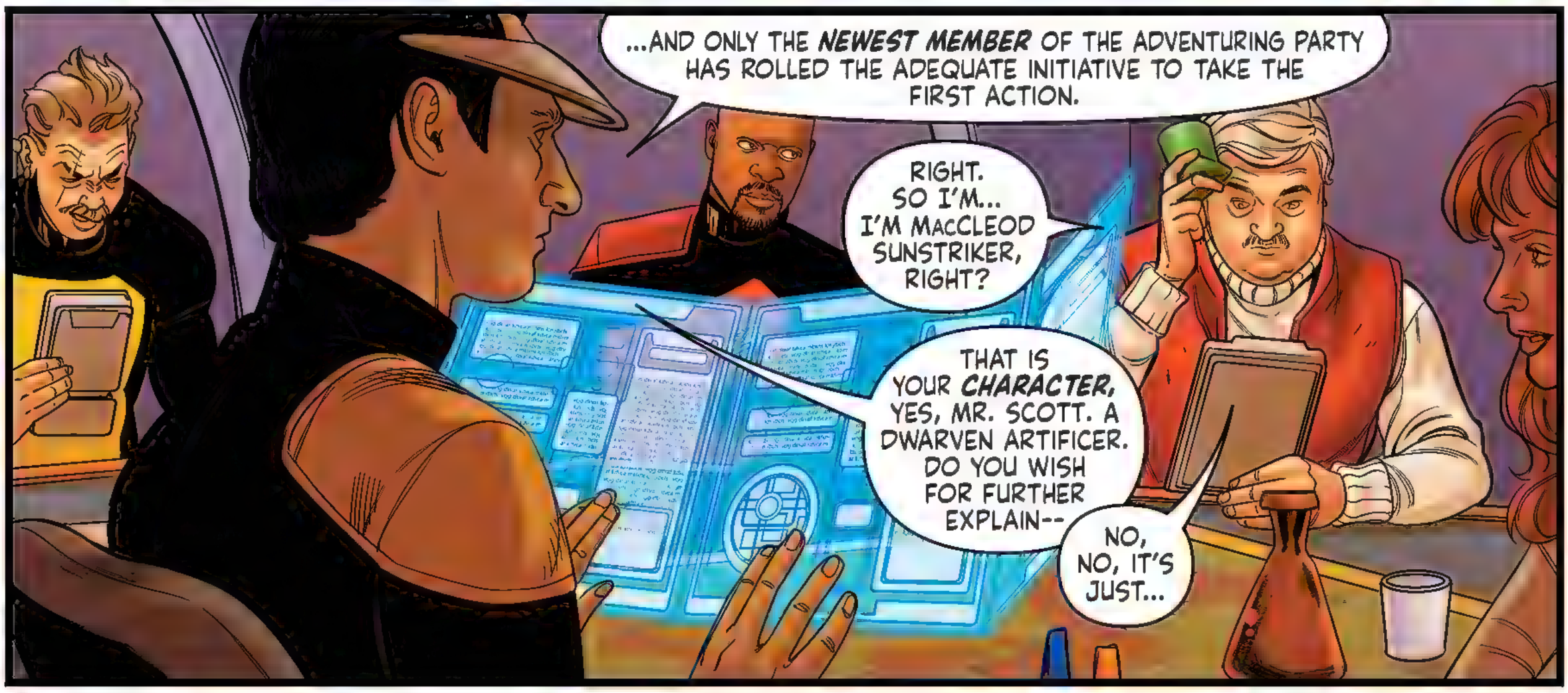
HE'S ALREADY FOUND HIMSELF A PLACE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW COLONY.

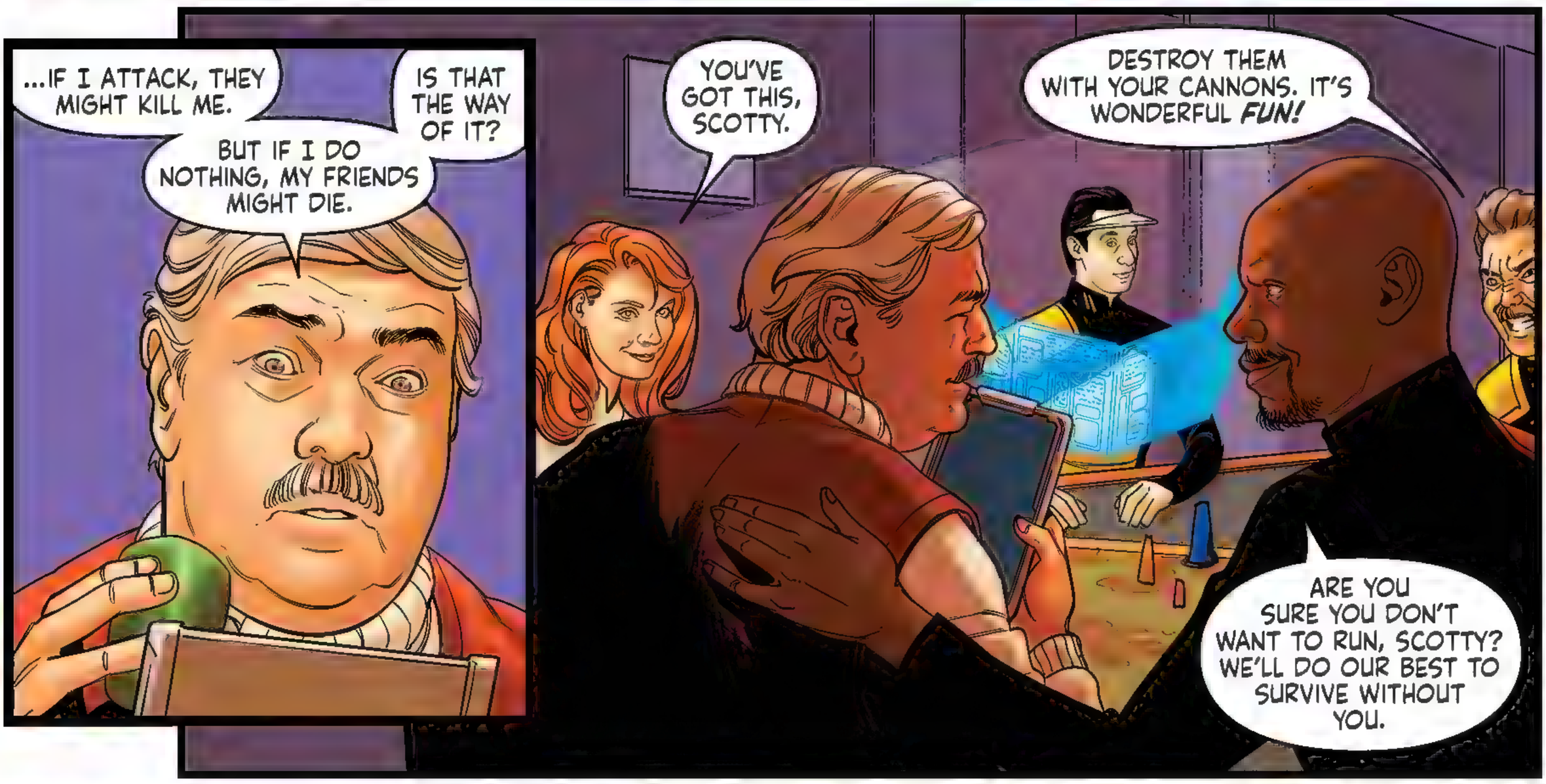
I'M GLAD THEY HAVE HIM.

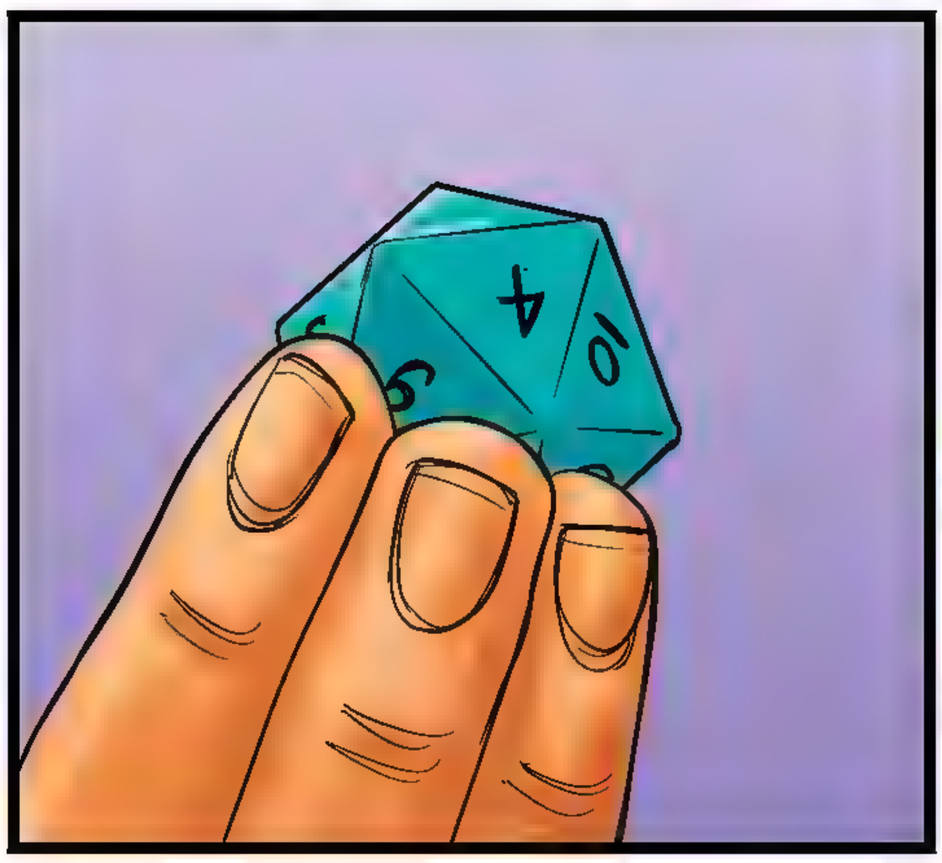
EVERY INTELLIGENT SPECIES DESERVES AT LEAST ONE ***JIM KIRK.***

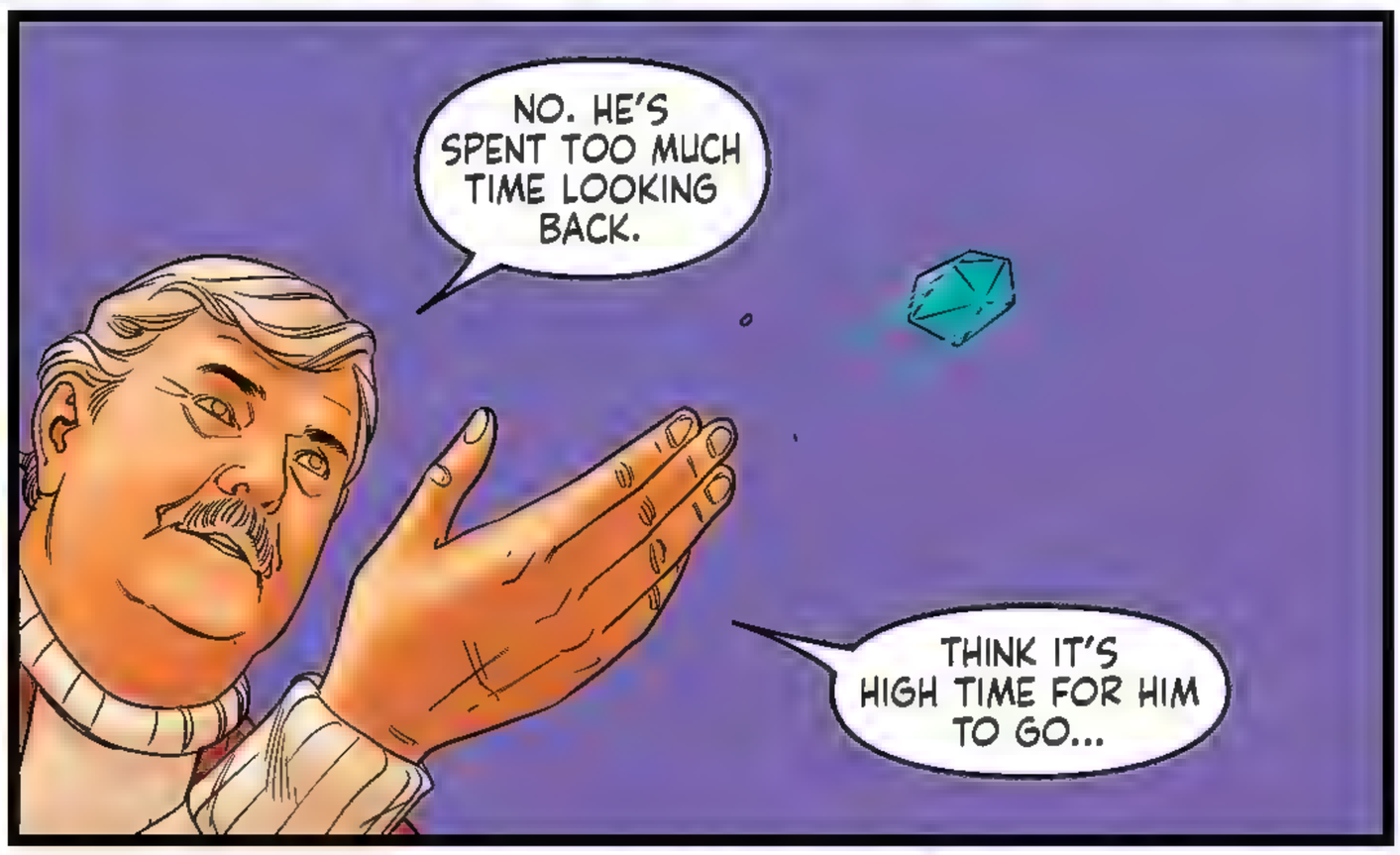
AS FOR THE OLD ENGINEER LEFT BEHIND...


...I'VE BEGUN WONDERING IF I MIGHT TAKE MY OWN ADVICE TO HEART.
YOU HAVE SMASHED THROUGH THE CASTLE DEFENSES, BUT THIS HAS ONLY ALERTED THE VAMPIRE MENACE AT THE HEART OF THE BLOODSWEPT KEEP.
THE HORDE IS CHARGING, BARING TOOTH AND FANG...


...AND ONLY THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE ADVENTURING PARTY HAS ROLLED THE ADEQUATE INITIATIVE TO TAKE THE FIRST ACTION.
RIGHT. SO I'M... I'M MACCLEOD SUNSTRIKER, RIGHT?
THAT IS YOUR CHARACTER, YES, MR. SCOTT. A DWARVEN ARTIFICER. DO YOU WISH FOR FURTHER EXPLAIN--
NO, NO, IT'S JUST...


...IF I ATTACK, THEY MIGHT KILL ME.
IS THAT THE WAY OF IT?
BUT IF I DO NOTHING, MY FRIENDS MIGHT DIE.
YOU'VE GOT THIS, SCOTTY.
DESTROY THEM WITH YOUR CANNONS. IT'S WONDERFUL FUN!
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO RUN, SCOTTY? WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO SURVIVE WITHOUT YOU.




NO. HE'S SPENT TOO MUCH TIME LOOKING BACK.
THINK IT'S HIGH TIME FOR HIM TO GO...

"...AND BOLDLY."
THE END.

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THE EXPLOSIVE SAGA OF SISKO'S *U.S.S. THESEUS* AND WORF'S HANDPICKED SQUAD CONTINUES MONTHLY IN THE PAGES OF *STAR TREK* AND *STAR TREK: DEFIANT* ...BUILDING TO THE EPIC *DAY OF BLOOD* CROSSOVER!

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- ✓ *STAR TREK: FREE COMIC BOOK DAY 2023—PRELUDE TO DAY OF BLOOD*
- ✓ *STAR TREK: DEFIANT #3*
- ✓ *STAR TREK #8*
- ✓ *STAR TREK ANNUAL 2023*

JUNE 2023

- *STAR TREK: DEFIANT #4*
- *STAR TREK #9*

JULY 2023

- *STAR TREK: DEFIANT #5*
- *STAR TREK #10*
- *STAR TREK, VOL. 1: GODSHOCK* (COLLECTS *STAR TREK #1-6*)

STAR TREK DAY OF BLOOD

FIVE-PART CROSSOVER

JULY 2023

- *STAR TREK: DAY OF BLOOD #1*

AUGUST 2023

- *STAR TREK: DEFIANT #6*
- *STAR TREK #11*

SEPTEMBER 2023

- *STAR TREK: DEFIANT #7*
- *STAR TREK #12*

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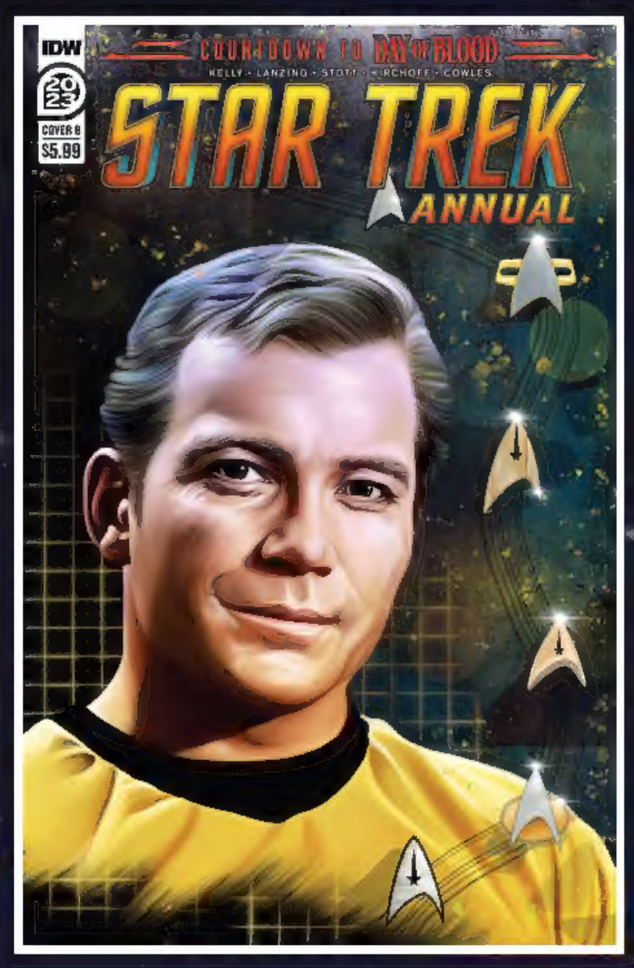

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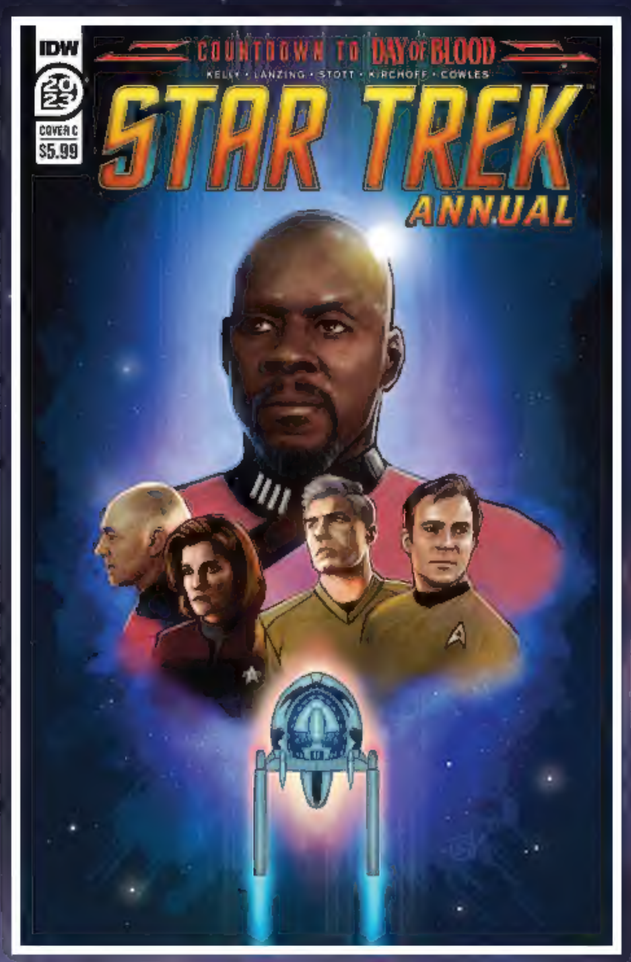

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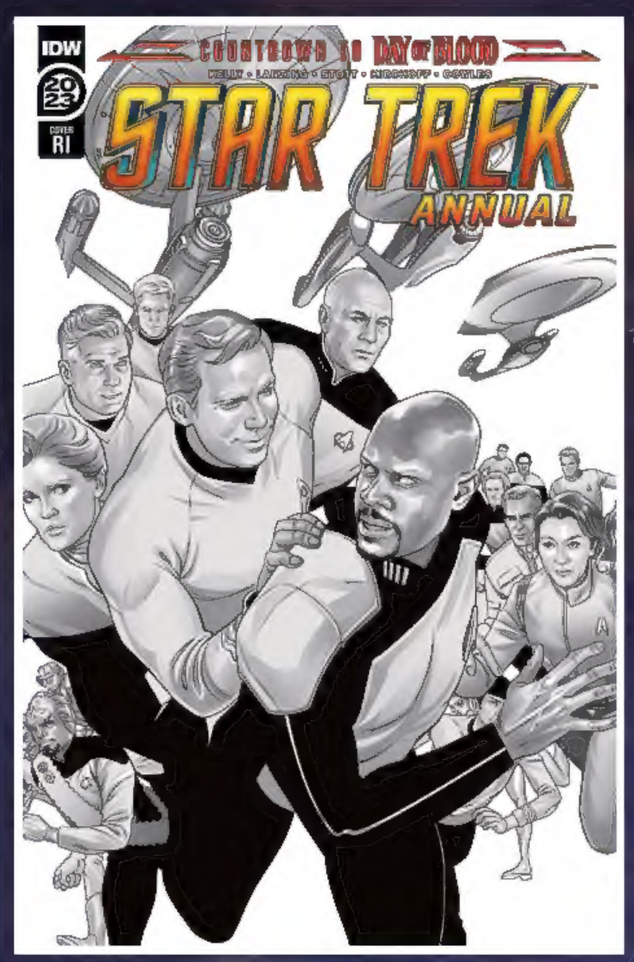

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